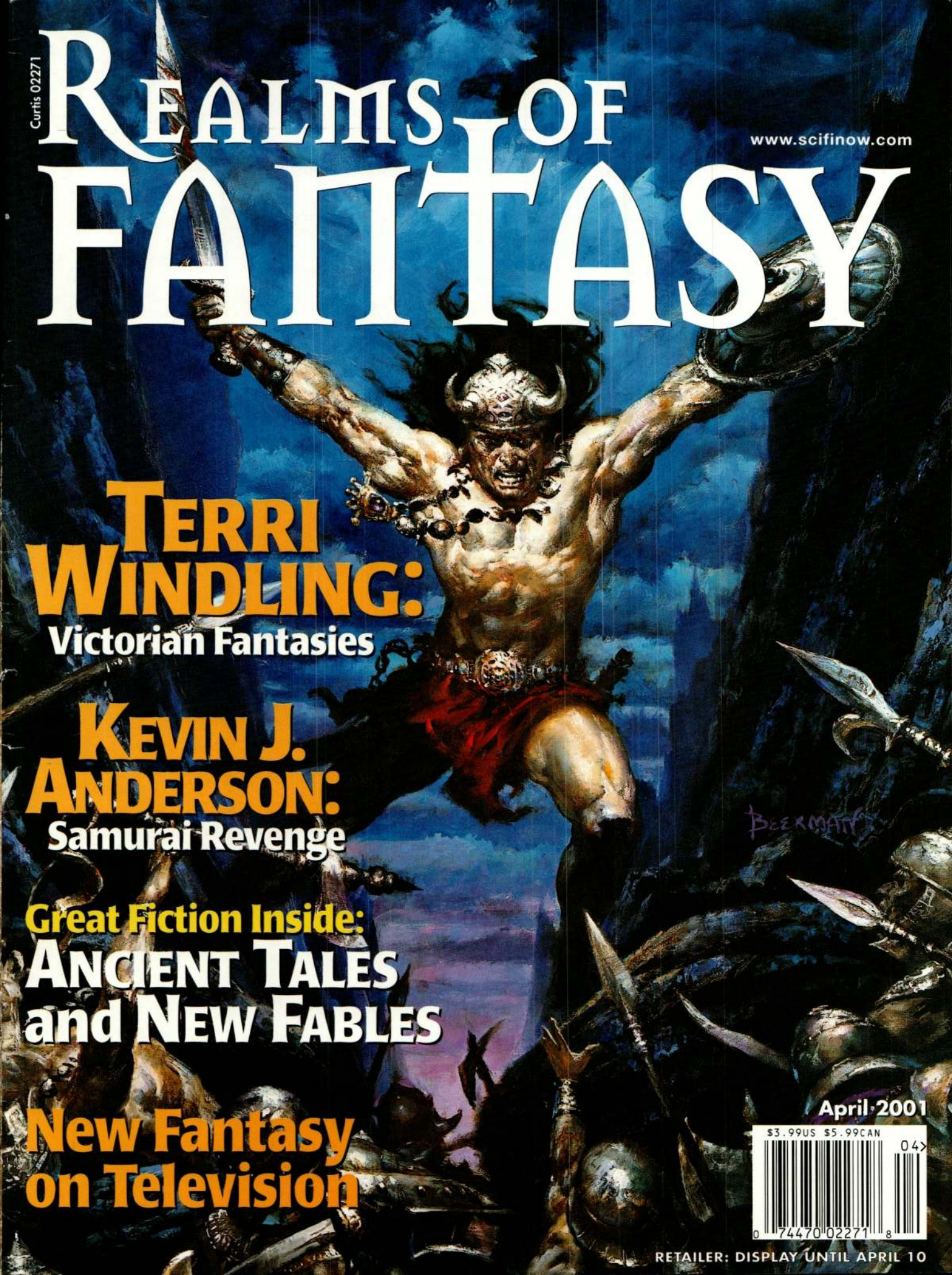
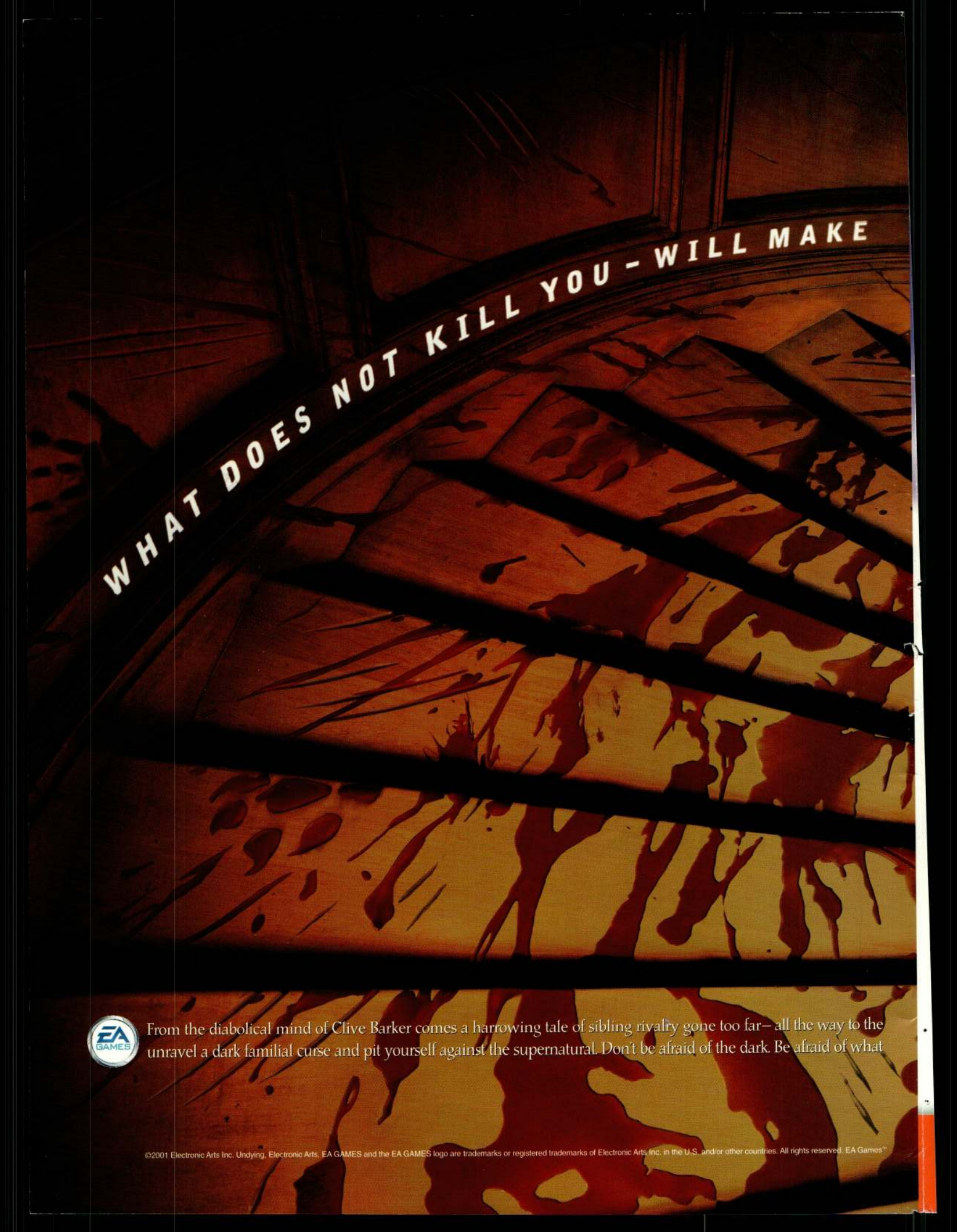

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contents



RIGHT: Iris *by John Atkinson Grimshaw. Victorian Fairy Painting is the subject of this month's Gallery.*

COVER: Death Valley *by Doug Beekman.*

departments

6 EDITORIAL

8 LETTERS

12 TELEVISION
By Resa Nelson
Xena fans take heart, the airwaves are still alive with strong female characters.

18 FOLKROOTS
By Terri Windling
Victorian Fantasies: England's Golden Age of fairy art, literature, and drama.

26 BOOKS
By Gahan Wilson and Paul Di Filippo
A vampire's life: The saga of Yarbro's Saint-Germain continues.

66 GALLERY
By Terri Windling
Victorian Fairy Painting: The Golden Age of Fairy Painting casts its spell on artists to the present day.

72 GAMES
By Eric T. Baker
Ragnar takes on the Sark Amen in the new PC game Rune.

82 CONTRIBUTORS

fiction

32 REDMOND'S PRIVATE SCREENING
By Kevin J. Anderson
The line between shame and dishonor is a thin one, but it can be very important.

38 MESSAGES
By Rob Vagle
When destiny calls, what will your answer be? And can it make a difference?

42 OTHERLING
By Juliet Marillier
When we choose with our hearts, sometimes our choices are flawed. When we choose with our heads, they almost always are.

48 HARDEN TIMES
By Susan J. Kroupa
There is no replacement for love—except more love.

56 SOP DOLL
By Milbre Burch
You should always be kind to animals—especially if they talk.

60 THE PREMATURE BURIALS
By Andy Duncan
Until death do you part? Sorry, you're not getting off that easy.

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editorial

The Saga Continues: *The Grapes of Wrath* vs. Dragonlance, Round II

Dear Ms. McCarthy,

Thank you very much for publishing my first letter. I found your response very appropriate and thought provoking, one that deserves a response of its own.

I feel a need to defend the statements I made in my last letter with slightly more analysis. First, I fully acknowledge that discrimination and violence occur daily in our society. (If they did not, the news industry might see a sharp decline in ratings.) However, your response to my letter seems to indicate that you believe literature, particularly fiction as *The Grapes of Wrath* is, should serve to educate future generations on genocide, war, and discrimination. Would not such knowledge be better communicated with factual references such as those found in a history class? I find that many of my peers tend to focus on the plot of a book rather than the underlying concepts or symbols which in turn means that they never grasp the lessons the novel intended to teach. Rather, they memorize what the main character did and in what order he did it so as to quantitatively prove their "understanding" on a written test. These students might as well have never opened the book. On the other hand, a history class would force students to focus on the topics of discrimination, hate, genocide, and so forth using examples from our history that have not been diluted or "censored" by the creative license granted to the authors of historical fiction. Thus the question becomes: Which is better, to place a direct focus on the follies of the past or to euphemize them and pray that the children navigate a maze of symbols and similes to grasp their importance?

While I see your point regarding literature of choice in college, I do not believe that the restrictions you imply are necessarily so. It is not the literature I will read in college that I look forward to so much as it is the analysis of it. I wish to voice my opinion on an aspect of the written word and not be told that I am wrong, misled, or ill-informed. I hold that each piece of literature can have 2.6 billion different meanings—one for each human alive. I do not believe that my interpretations are necessarily correct, but I know that when I hear other people's assessments that I can look at both of them and evaluate how my own might be improved or clarified. This is what I believe college should be about, and from the dozens of brochures and pamphlets I have received which, granted, are somewhat glorified, I honestly think that college will meet more than 70 percent of my expectations.

When you mention that "there is no comparison between *The Grapes of Wrath* and the Dragonlance series.... *The Grapes of Wrath* is one of the most important treasures of American Literature. The Dragonlance series is ... not," I cannot help but feel a great sense of loss. While *The Grapes of Wrath* was a very well-written novel, I believe it was harder for Tracy Hickman and Margaret Weis to mold from nothing, a world, characters to inhabit that world, a history to drive the plots of the novels, and an underlying sense of completeness that keeps Dragonlance fans asking for more. On the other hand, John Steinbeck already had inspiration for his novel. His passion created a wonderful book, but Weis and Hickman had to create that passion. Which is more difficult, to write about a world in which you live and interact daily or to first create a new world, imagine yourself in it, give yourself entities to interact with, and then record it on paper with such detail and precision that the person reading your work experiences the same feelings that you have engendered? My respect goes to all three authors, but my admiration goes to Weis and Hickman.

You stated that you receive three hundred stories a month. Why would anyone think they could succeed in being published out of three hundred stories of the caliber in your magazine? Thanks again for a great magazine, keep up the great work!

Sincerely,
Bryan Jones

Thank you for offering such a thoughtful and well-reasoned response, Bryan. In all my years of railing at what I perceive as shortsightedness, I've never had a correspondent offer such a dignified reply. Therefore, in contrast to last issue's Editorial, I'll offer the same back to you.

First, should students learn history in history class rather than in the pages of novels? I guess this comes down to a matter of opinion. Personally, I can read about Alexander the

Continued on page 79

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VOLUME 7 NUMBER 4

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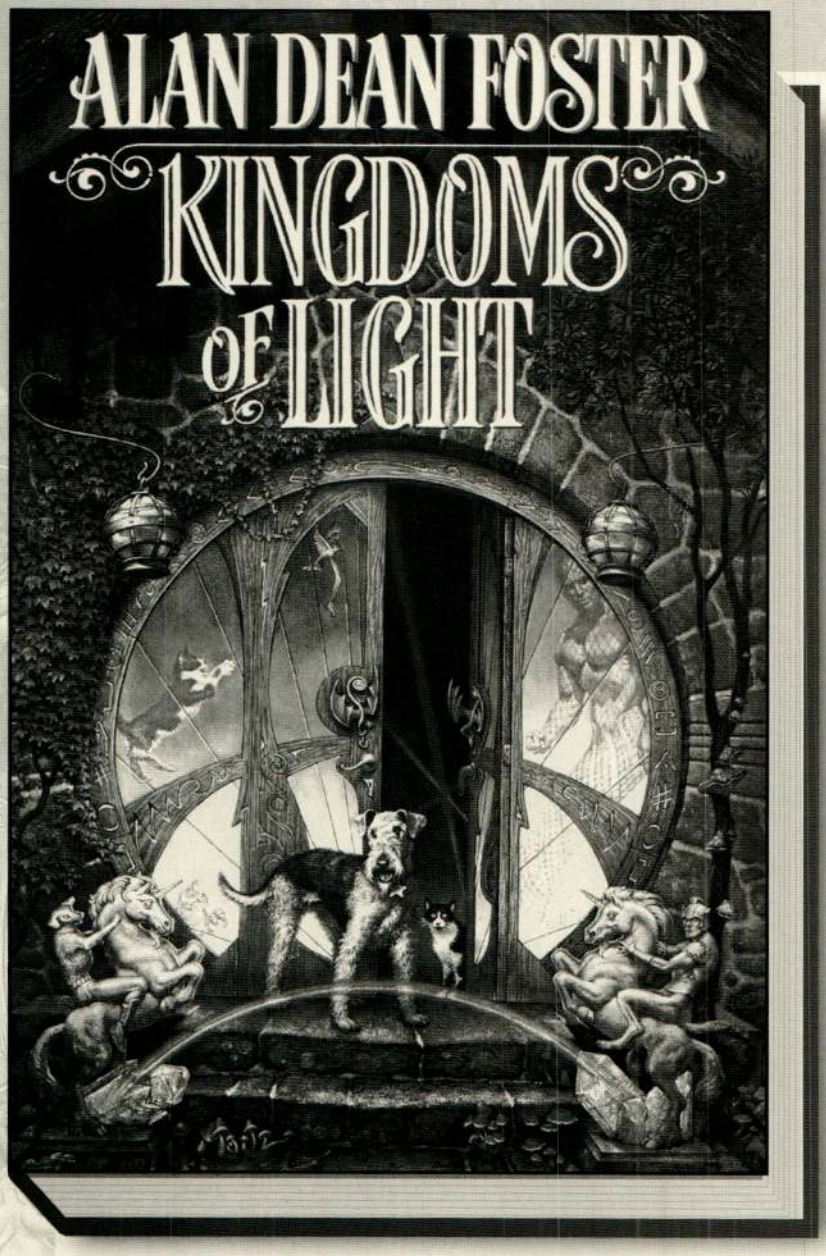
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Advertising Director
(703) 733-2160

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Dear Ms. McCarthy,

Alright, you've heard everyone's opinion on your cover art … but I am not giving you mine. That is not to suggest I don't have one. I simply don't see the aim of everyone tossing the same stones at each other. I can understand both (or all three) sides fairly well—either the covers are viewed as "sleazy" or "free art." I could perhaps sympathize with what I consider the most reasonable argument, that they are somewhat exaggerated or far-fetched. Let us admit that no self-respecting "warrioress" would be caught dead with that much body exposure. But hey, it is Fantasy.

I don't mind the half-naked women, I simply do not like the implication from various readers of *Realms* that the covers are "sexy." Erotic, maybe … but the idea that an attractive woman is nothing more than sex appeal is vulgar. Why can't we think "what a beautiful picture" instead of "boy, I hope there is a dirty story inside."

Also, cover diversity is not a reason for complaint. Specifically the letter from Mr. Brandon Kaye. "Fairy tale drivel????" What in the name of existence does he think Fantasy/Sci-Fi/Horror derives from? A low-budget porn flick? A *Penthouse* magazine? Smut magazines do not offend me—it just is a fact that *Realms* isn't one.

I would be much happier (well, sorry—here's my opinion after all) to see more of the sensual and less of the "sleazy."

Much affection,
Erin Aileen Strong

Quite a mature letter for one so young, Erin. Apparently the covers of the magazine do strike a chord. Some positive, some not so … You raise some very interesting points in your words to us. I believe it often comes down to the fact that we cannot please everyone all of the time … that someone somewhere is perhaps going to be offended by something … and that we do try to balance the appearance of male warriors on the cover with their female counterparts. I personally would enjoy seeing a few more wizards, dragons and wee folk on the cover …

Dear *Realms*,

I bought my first issue of *Realms* a few months ago and I enjoyed it immensely. Especially the short story "Mom and Dad on the Home Front." Your magazine, as well as J.K Rowling's Harry Potter novels, have rekindled my own desire to write again. Isn't it time you did a feature article on Ms. Rowling?

I also wanted to mention that in Terri Windling's feature on the many versions of Snow White, nothing was mentioned about the film, *Snow White—A Tale of Terror*, starring Sigourney Weaver and Sam Neill. I would recommend it as a well done alternative to the classic Disney adaption.

Sincerely yours,
Edwin Hopkins

Dear *Realms of Fantasy*,

I would like to tell you how much I enjoy your magazine. The fiction is great and I look forward to the Folkroots column. However, I was most impressed with the gallery article feature on John Howe in the October issue. Since the first time I read the *Fionavar Tapestry* it has been my absolute favorite series. So you can understand my excitement when I saw the wonderful illustrations for *The Wandering Fire* and *The Darkest Road*. Do you know if any of Mr. Howe's work is available as prints for purchase?

Thank you for any information and keep up the good work!

Sincerely,
Shelley

For online information on John Howe's artwork, try these sites … www.brightweavings.com, www.eldar.org, www.daerons.demon.co.uk, and the most likely source (online) for purchasing information appears to be found at www.fantasiaonline.com.

Dear Ms. McCarthy,

First off, let me say that I just love *Realms of Fantasy!* When my issue arrives it gets read cover to cover within a couple of days or so, and then, of course, reread. I really enjoy the cover artwork—which brings me to the purpose of the letter. From time to time, my magazine will arrive missing its protective cover. (December 2000, for example). Are the same gremlins at work who steal away the last few lines of the story? There is nothing worse than to see a beautiful cover ruined by a mailing label. Is it possible to keep those protective covers on the magazine—or is the cost too high?

Sincerely,
Gary Regulski

I don't know the answer to this question as we still appear to be getting magazines here with the protective covers. Perhaps it was just an oversight that particular month? What we would like to know is which gremlin keeps sending torn up covers stuffed in manila envelopes to the Realms P.O. Box with postage due? Which reminds me, postage is set to go up in January 2001. By the time you read this issue, it will most likely be in effect. Please remember to adjust the postage on submissions accordingly. We will swing the 1 cent increase on the first 50 manuscripts caught short in the slush … but after that its up to you—

Dear Ms. McCarthy,

Could you offer me some advice on how to submit a manuscript to Realms of Fantasy?

Thank you very much,
Guy Estes

Most important—READ the magazine, KNOW IT WELL, and make sure your piece is suited to us. Many rejections occur each year simply because the piece submitted is not a work of fantasy. Do not assume that because you know your way around a computer that you are a writer. Your story must have heart, depth, details, character development, plot and all the rest. You are competing with a lot of other writers—so astound me with your story! I am not your teacher, reviewer, writing workshop pal … the story must be WHOLE when it is submitted, not a work-in-progress and I, unfortunately, rarely have the time to inject personal commentary into a rejection—although I realize you all wish I would!

Be prepared for a response time of at LEAST 8-12 weeks. Please refrain from wicked accusations when inquiring about your piece … Mechanically … we expect the manuscript to be double-spaced, neat, and already proofread. Don't forget the SASE—and it is easier for us, as well as promotes a quicker response, if we can dispose of rejected manuscripts rather than returning them. We are not equipped to respond via e-mail at this date.

Dear *Realms*,

Where is the *Realms of Fantasy* Web site? I can't find it—but someone told me you had one up and running.

Kyle Sinclair

The address is www.scifinow.com. Currently one can view online the October book review by Gahan Wilson, and various fiction from Dave Smeds, Franklin Thatcher, Lawrence Watt-Evans, Bruce Glassco, Richard Parks, David Sandner and M. Shayne Bell. One can also make fantasy-related purchases online at this site and glean information on games, television, and cinema—also one might wish to renew a Realms *subscription in this manner!*

Your letters are welcome. Send them to: Letters to the Editor, Realms of Fantasy, *P.O. Box 527, Rumson, NJ 07760. Or better yet, E-mail to: shawnam896@aol.com*

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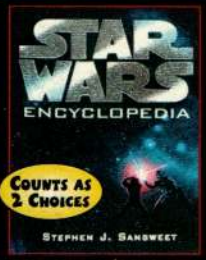
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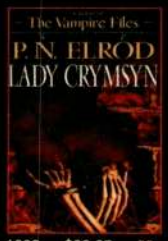
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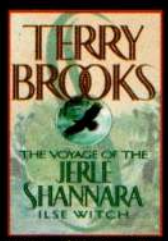
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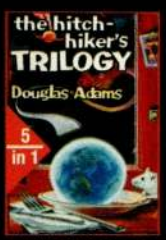
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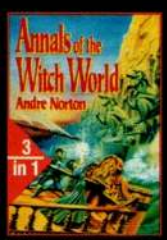
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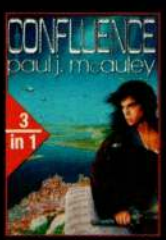
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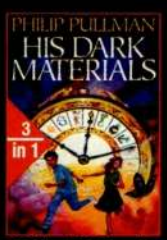
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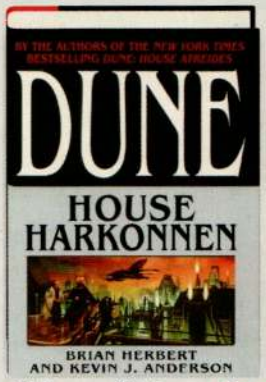


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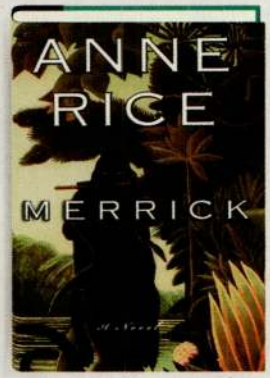
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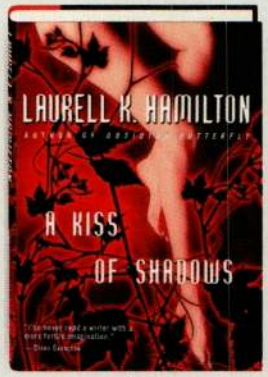
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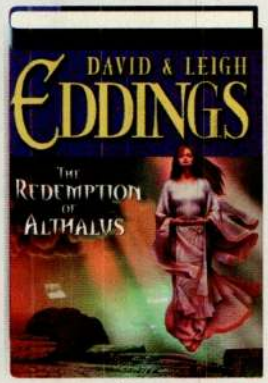
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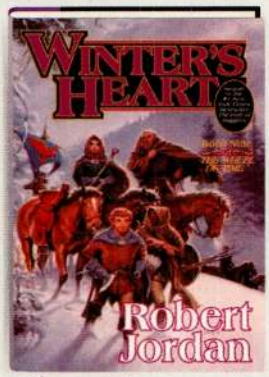
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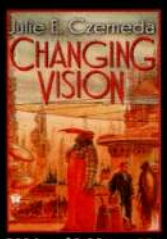
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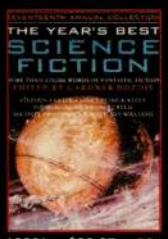
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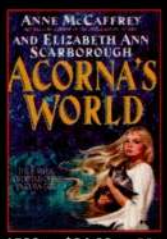
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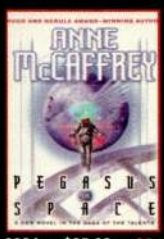
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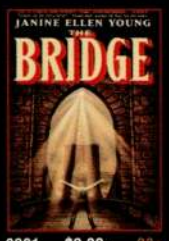
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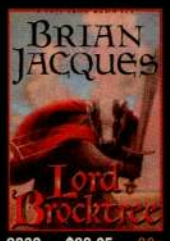
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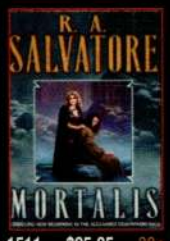
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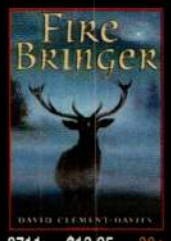
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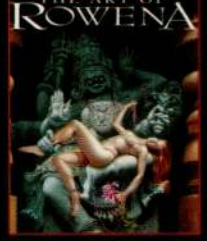


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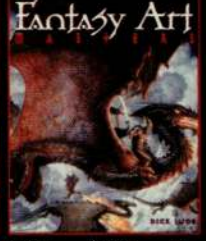
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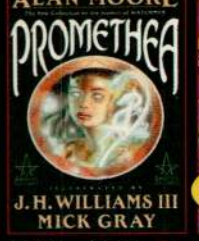
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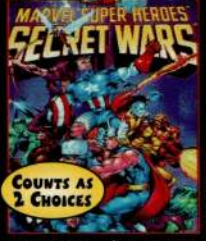
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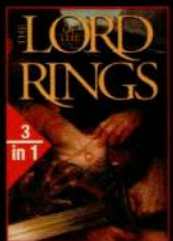
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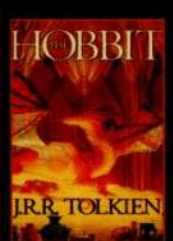
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By Resa Nelson

Xena fans take heart, the airwaves are still alive with strong female characters.

You've probably already heard the bad news: The current season of *Xena: Warrior Princess* will be its last. The good news is that *Xena*'s success over the past six years has made an impact. Xena served as a new role model, providing proof that a strong female character can attract and keep viewers' attention. It's probably no coincidence that more and more new Fantasy series have been cropping up in syndication during the past few years—and that it's becoming more common to see strong female leads in these series.

Part of the trend is to bypass the expense of filming in the United States. *Xena* was filmed in New Zealand, while other Fantasy series are made on location in Australia, France, Spain, and Canada. Not only do viewers benefit from seeing the beauty of foreign landscapes, but such series often utilize the talents of some of the finest actors from around the globe.

As we enter the middle of the 2000/2001 television season, let's look at some of the new syndicated series, as well as a couple of new Fantasy offerings on cable.

One of the most exciting and promising new series is *The Secret Adventures of Jules Verne* on the SCI FI Channel. The series' premise is that Verne's novels were based on real-life adventures—and that his characters were based on people in his own life.



Tessa Alvarado (played by Tessie Santiago) avenges her father's murder by becoming the Queen of Swords.

English actor Michael Praed portrays Phileas Fogg, the fictional character of Verne's novel *Around the World in 80 Days*. In Verne's *Secret Life*, Phileas Fogg is a cynical gambler who hooks up with a young Jules Verne. "Essentially, I'm a 19th-century James Bond kind of character," Praed says. "But the show is peppered with Jules Verne's imaginings and his hopes for the future. And if you're an aficionado of Jules Verne, you'll certainly recognize great elements of truth within the script. He really was a visionary."

The series taps into this fact. Verne is portrayed as a young, starving artist, long before he found success as a novelist. He faces the League of Darkness, a group of mercenaries who want to steal his ideas for their own profit. Verne is befriended by Fogg who, together with Rebecca Fogg and manservant Passepartout, help Verne prevent the League of Darkness from misusing and abusing his ideas.

Phileas Fogg's cousin, Rebecca, is the first female field agent employed by the British Secret Service. She's athletic and fearless. She's also ready, willing, and able when it comes to drinking or fighting.

The series doesn't hesitate to push the boundaries of its characters. The heroes aren't always heroic. Phileas Fogg, especially, is flawed in interesting ways that make him very human and believable.

"The one thing about our show is that it's very unusual," says Praed. "It is a 19th-century action-adventure series with spectacular special effects, and that hasn't happened before. It's a gloriously rich production. You literally won't believe some of the effects. And the costumes are ravishing."

In fact, each episode costs upward of $1 million. Not only is the series rich in production values, but it's a ground-breaker in that this is the first television series to be shot in high-definition video.

"We are the guinea pigs, as it were, for the new tech-



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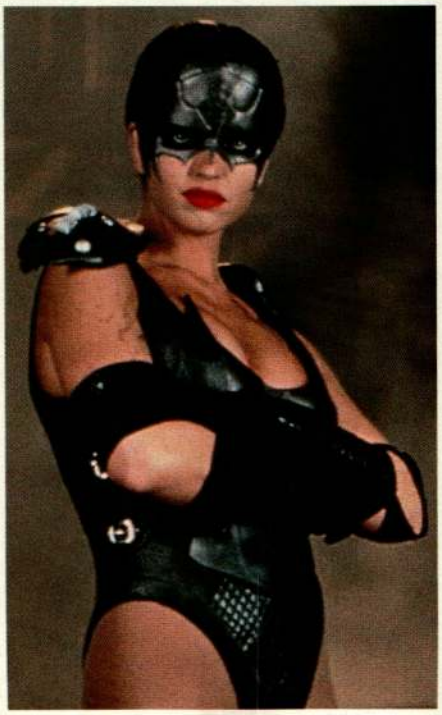
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nology," Praed continues. "And, of course, if you're doing a special effects show—which is all done on computer, because eventually our images are all in the digital domain—it makes the marriage of action and special effects essentially seamless. Everything is digitized."

Another action-adventure period piece is *Queen of Swords*, a new syndicated series that's fashioned after Zorro. But this time around, it's a woman who wears the mask. Although the mask is made of lace instead of leather, the woman who wears it doesn't hesitate to raise her sword and swashbuckle with the best of them.

Set in the year 1817, Tessa Alvarado (played by newcomer Tessie Santiago) is a young aristocrat who's learning the finer points of fencing in Madrid, Spain, when she receives a message that her father was accidentally killed in California. Tessa returns to California, the place where she was born and raised, accompanied by her servant and friend, Marta (played by Spanish actress Paulina Galvez). Marta is a gypsy who uses Tarot cards to cast her prophecies.



Tessa takes care to keep her own cards close to her chest when she encounters California's savage frontier—she presents herself as a faint-hearted lady of privilege instead of a force to be reckoned with. She discovers that a military governor, Colonel Montoya (played by Valentine Pelka), has set up his own dictatorship and has taxed his subjects into a state of poverty. As Montoya succinctly states, "I am the law." His right-hand man is Captain Grisham (played by Anthony Lemke), a former army soldier whose secret keeps him under Montoya's thumb.

Tessa's concern is for the average man, woman, and child. Although she has plenty of fellow Spanish aristocrats (the "Dons") as neighbors of her California family estate, she has little in common with them. In fact, when Tessa quizzes one of the Dons about the possibility that her father was murdered, the Don advises her to go back to Spain, get married, and have babies.

In the premiere episode, the ghost of Tessa's father visits her in a dream. He confirms her suspicion that he was murdered and tells her that many men were involved. He asks for her to be his avenging angel. He tells her that her destiny is to fight for honor and justice.

While Tessa dreams, her friend Marta lays out a spread of Tarot cards, which confirm the ghostly message. Once awake, Tessa follows through on a message from her father's ghost, and stumbles upon a hidden treasure



ABOVE: Gena Lee Nolin (pictured with Margo Moorer as Kali) is the latest Sheena who uses her shape-shifting power to guard the jungle.
TOP LEFT: Tia Carrere is Sydney Fox, archeological treasure hunter, professor, and martial arts expert in Relic Hunter.
LEFT: Michelle Lintel plays police detective Darcy Walker by day and crime fighter Black Scorpion by night.



Rebecca Fogg (Francesca Hunt) is the British Secret Service's first female field agent in The Secret Adventures of Jules Verne.

room within the family home. There, Tessa discovers not only enough gold to pay the taxes that will enable her to keep the estate, but the sword her father had saved for the son he never had, as well as her dead mother's favorite black lace shawl.

Tessa rescues the innocent who find themselves in trouble—wearing a black mask fashioned from her mother's shawl and wielding the sword that her father left behind. She fights with both her wit and her weapons. She leaves behind the Tarot card that predicted her destiny—the Queen of Swords—as her calling card.

Shot entirely on location in Almeda, Spain, *Queen of Swords* boasts an international cast of actors from Spain, Wales, and Canada. Tessie Santiago is a first-generation American whose family fled from Cuba after Castro took control of the country. Santiago learned how to fence, dance the flamenco, and ride horseback for her role as the Queen of Swords.

One of the major forces behind *Xena: Warrior Princess* is Steven L. Sears—he not only served as executive producer of *Xena* for four seasons, but he also wrote 25 of its episodes. Sears now brings his talents to a new syndicated series, *Sheena*, as one of its creators and executive producers.

Sheena is no stranger to television. In the mid-1950s, Irish McCalla starred as *Sheena, Queen of the Jungle*, in its one-year run. *Sheena* is based on a successful comic book. In 1984, Tanya Roberts starred in the movie, *Sheena*, based on the same comic-book character.

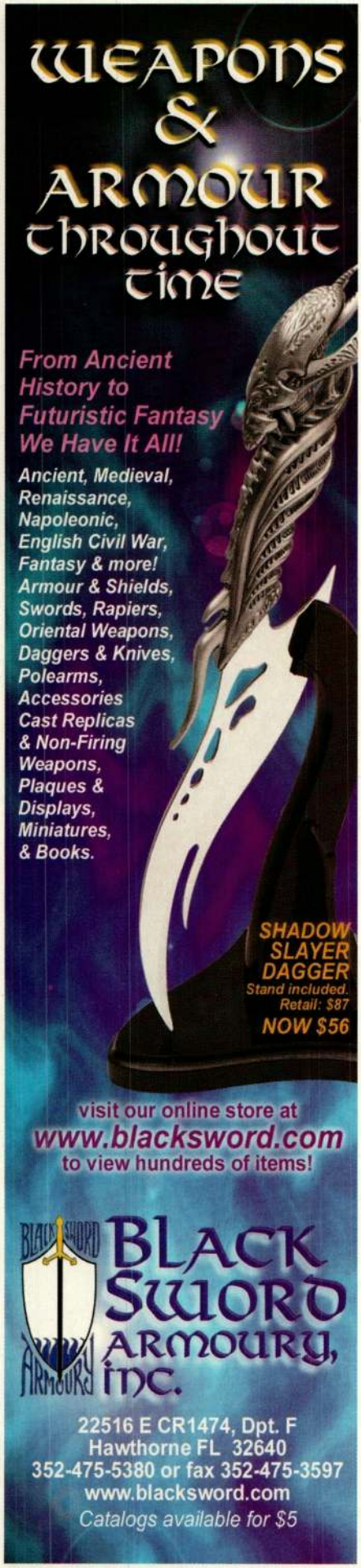
In the current update, Gena Lee Nolin (*Baywatch*) takes over the title role. When Sheena is orphaned as a child in Africa, she's raised by Kali (played by Margo Moorer). Kali is the sole survivor of the Kaya, a tribe that had the knowledge of shape-shifting. This knowledge has now been passed to Sheena.

When she makes eye contact with an animal, Sheena becomes that animal. If she looks into the eyes of a gorilla, she becomes a gorilla herself; if she looks into the eyes of a leopard, she becomes a leopard. The idea is that she's connecting with a mystical element in the animal's blood, and she's then able to use that element to transform herself into the same kind of animal. Shape-shifting is a power that Sheena uses to guard the jungle, the animals, and the local people from any outsiders who threaten them.

Sheena meets her love interest, Cutter (played by John Allen Nelson), by sabotaging his plane so that it crashes in the jungle. Cutter is a guide for fortune hunters, as well as tourists who come to the jungle in search of the legendary Darak'Na, a mythological creature that's rumored to be half-beast, half-human. In the first episode of the series, Cutter discovers Sheena masquerading as the Darak'Na.

A nice twist comes in a later episode when Sheena actually becomes the Darak'Na by accident. Although Sheena has said herself that she's either human or she's animal at any given time, they learn the hard way that if Sheena is interrupted while transforming herself (in this case, a panther dies as she's connecting with it), then she remains stuck in a state of transformation until a way is found to complete it.

Black Scorpion, another series based on a comic-book character, comes to life on the SCI FI Channel. The show features a strong female lead (played by newcomer Michelle Lintel) who lives by day as straight-laced police detective Darcy Walker but transforms herself at night into crime fighter Black Scorpion. The series has the humor, fun, and style



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Goodwin (played by Steve Braun), The Immortal's adopted son, is confronted by demons from Hell.

of a comic book, with the production values of a motion picture.

One of the series' executive producers and co-creators is Hollywood legend Roger Corman, who has produced more than 550 films and directed over 50. During the past several years, Corman made two Black Scorpion movies for the Showtime cable TV network. Both made-for-Showtime movies were very successful. When a German TV network contacted Corman with a request to make a German TV show based on his *Black Scorpion* movies, Corman declined in favor of making his own series. Using his own production company, he took a leap of faith and shot 22 episodes of *Black Scorpion* without a buyer. It was only after all 22 episodes had been made that Corman sold the series to the SCI FI Channel.

"There is a comic-book style to it," Corman says. "I would describe Black Scorpion as a comic-book superhero—a female Superman, Spiderman, Batman. It's got a lot of action, and it is a funny show.

"I don't think there's any show on the air that has this much action and special effects. We have both a lot of martial arts and a lot of physical action. Black Scorpion is an expert martial-arts fighter."

In fact, Michelle Lintel is an expert martial-arts fighter herself, skilled in both Tai Kwon Do and Krav Maga, which is the official combat art of the Israeli military forces. She performs almost all of her own stunts, including martial arts and driving stunts.

One of the interesting aspects of *Black Scorpion* is its collection of villains. They're not bad because they were born that way. Instead, the villains lean more toward being good people who have gone bad for specific reasons. And those reasons not only change each villain's self-perception but propel that villain's actions. Although their actions are often propelled by a desire for revenge, their demands aren't always a bad thing. For example, a seismologist invents a machine that can cause earthquakes. She threatens to use it to destroy a city if the mayor of that city doesn't provide the homeless with places to live.

"Some of the issues we deal with are serious ecological and sociological concepts," Corman says, "but we deal with them in a fantastic way and in a humorous, slightly tongue-in-cheek way. We were not trying to take it too seriously, although many of the subjects themselves are serious."

The Immortal is a new syndicated series that takes the demon-killing element from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel*, adds in the sending-them-back-to-Hell ingredient from *Brimstone*, and tosses in a dash of immortality from *Highlander*.

Lorenzo Lamas (*Renegade*) stars as Raphael Cain, otherwise known as The Immortal. His mission is to hunt demons, use his weapons to pierce them into a head-shaking seizure, and watch as a harrowing tunnel opens up out of thin air to whisk those demons straight back to Hell. The demons can be harmed only by The Immortal's weapons, one of which is a samurai sword that was forged on his dead wife's funeral pyre. As Raphael explains to an FBI agent whose gunshots have no effect on a shape-shifting demon, "Bullets only annoy them."

Although Raphael lives in the here and now, he's about four hundred years old. His history begins in the 17th century, when he alone survived a shipwreck near Japan. He gains a father figure and mentor when he befriends a man named Yashiro. Raphael marries a woman named Mikiko, with whom he has a daughter, Kiyomi. They welcome an orphaned teenage boy, Goodwin, into their family. But Raphael's love for his wife is so intense that it offends two demons, who rise up from Hell, kill his wife, and steal his daughter.

When he vows a powerful oath of revenge

toward these demons, Raphael is transformed into The Immortal by the Fates. Recognizing that Raphael now has a mission to fight the evil forces in the world, his mentor Yashiro gives him the knowledge he'll need. The orphaned teenager Goodwin (played by Steve Braun) is also given immortality, and he walks by Raphael's side through time as his friend and ally. All the while, Raphael has never learned the fate of his daughter.

Now, in the present day, Raphael and Goodwin find themselves with a new ally. Dr. Sara Beckman (played by April Telek) is a mere mortal, but she brings her knowledge of science and technology to the table. She's also attracted to Raphael and shows jealousy when other women flirt with him. Sara feels a certain kinship with him. Her parents are dead, and she feels that Raphael understands her loss because of his own.

In the world of *The Immortal*, there is absolute good, absolute evil, and not much gray territory. The demons take sheer delight in being evil. Raphael stalks them with a steadfast solemnness, while Goodwin and Sara do their best to keep up and find a way to be of help. And they're not afraid to poke a bit of fun at themselves along the way.

Returning for its 2nd season in syndication is *Relic Hunter*, starring Tia Carrere (*Wayne's World*, *True Lies*, and *Rising Sun*) as a modern-day Indiana Jones. Carrere portrays Sydney Fox, a professor of ancient civilizations, who's sometimes hired to hop to a distant corner of the globe in search of an archaeological treasure. In her sideline as a relic hunter, Sydney's services are sought out by secret government agencies, private collectors, museum curators, law-enforcement officials, the wealthy, the obsessed, and the criminal.

Her archaeological pursuits are wide and varied. For example, a magician hires her to track down a jewel-encrusted staff that once belonged to Hungarian royalty, who lost it to a magic show hoax—and Sydney and Nigel end up exploring the secret passageways of The Magic Mansion in Atlantic City. On another case, a museum curator asks Sydney to find an Egyptian statue of a cat goddess that has been stolen. Legend has it that the statue is cursed, and that anyone who steals it will die by the claws of the cat. Dead bodies covered in claw marks begin to surface. On yet another case, when one of Sydney's former mentors dies, she pursues his life-long work: to recover a 13th-century Syrian chalice that's rumored to have the power to make people tell the truth. The clues that her mentor leaves behind lead her on a historical trail from the Syrian mystic who created the chalice to the pirate, Red Beard, who stole it, to a French diplomat who lost it two hundred years ago.

Despite her pursuit of priceless treasures, Sydney's no mercenary. She doesn't take being a professor lightly. She's more interested in the historical value of any given artifact. Given a choice, she'd rather see any artifact returned to the native people whose heritage it may impact, as opposed to seeing it used as a bartering chip by an entrepreneur whose sole interest lies in increasing his wealth.

As a relic hunter, Sydney's an adventuress. When she globe-trots, she takes along her teaching assistant, Nigel Bailey (played by Christien Anholt). Nigel's a Brit who'd rather stay at home doing research in a musty library than venture out into the dangerous unknown. But he dutifully follows Sydney wherever she leads, and they put their heads together to analyze ancient clues and ruins of past civilizations. While Nigel prefers to use his brain, Sydney is both a thinker and a fighter. When they get in a pinch, Sydney doesn't hesitate to use her fists or feet—she's a martial-arts master.

Whether Sydney's in the classroom or in an exotic land, she depends on her student secretary, Claudia (played by Lindy Booth), to hold down the fort. Although Claudia may appear shallow and a bit ditzy at first, she pays attention to what's going on around her and proves to be a valuable asset in the long run.

The 2nd season of *Relic Hunter* brings some new twists to the show. Student secretary Claudia occasionally joins Sydney and Nigel on their adventures. They begin to specialize in unearthing relics that are riddled with mystery and linked to the occult and the supernatural. But the link to Sydney's passion for history remains—some of the discoveries they make will reveal the truth behind historical references to the unexplained.



By Terri Windling

Victorian Fantasies: England's Golden Age of fairy art, literature, and drama.



In this self-portrait, Victorian painter John Anster Fitzgerald (1857) surrounds himself with fairy creatures straight out of his dreams and nightmares.

The acceptance and rapid growth of fairyland as a fit subject matter for literature, painting, and the stage from the 1820s to the 1840s and its survival until at least World War I is one of the most remarkable phenomena of 19th-century culture," writes Michael Booth in *Victorian Spectacular Theatre* about an aspect of English history that is little discussed today. Paradoxically, although it was during Victorian times that fantasy and fairy tales became firmly associated with childhood, it was also a time when adult interest in the subject could not have been higher. In previous Folkroots and Gallery columns, we looked at the Pre-Raphaelite writers and painters of 19th-century England; in this article, we're going to explore the broader world of magical arts during the same time period. You'll also find a selection of Victorian fairy paintings in the Gallery section of this magazine.

The first thing to note about the surge of interest in fairy tales in 19th-century England is that this is a late development when compared to the Continent. In Europe, fairy tales were popularized by Italian intellectuals in the 16th century, the French avant-garde in the 17th century, and the German Romantics in the18th century—but it took until the 19th century for the trend to catch on in England. The British Isles have always boasted a wonderfully rich oral folklore tradition and are steeped in myth cycles both Arthurian and Celtic; furthermore, English literature rests on works by writers unafraid to dip into this well of magic: Mallory, Chaucer, Spenser, Marlowe, and Shakespeare among them. So why did it take so long for fairy tale arts to blossom across the Channel? The answer is a religious one. British society was governed by Puritan social codes after the Revolution of 1688; certain art forms were made illegal,

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while others were effectively discouraged by the culture (the mythic arts among the latter.) Literature of the day was expected to be serious, rational, Protestant, and deeply moral—while folk tales were deemed to be crude, perverse, frivolous, and uncomfortably pagan. Magic did not *entirely* disappear from literature—Pope's *Rape of the Lock* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* were both popular 18th-century texts; yet these were satires, poking fun at the conventions of folk and fairy tales; the magic in them was rationalized as allegory, and distanced by humor.

It was not until the end of the 18th century that serious fairy tales began to cast their spell of enchantment once again through the works of the English Romantic poets, and mystical artists such as Henry Fuseli and the poet/painter William Blake. Early in the 19th century, magical tales and poems by the German Romantics (Goethe, Tieck, Novalis, etc.) were published in English magazines—including *Undine,* an enormously popular story by Baron de la Motte Fouqué about a water nymph's love for a mortal knight, which inspired a host of subsequent stories, paintings, and dramatic productions. This was also the time when Sir Walter Scott and other antiquarians were busy collecting folk tales and ballads from all across the British Isles, preserving old-country lore in a nation that was rapidly urbanizing. Two groundbreaking volumes by Thomas Keightley (*The Fairy Mythology*) and Thomas Crofton Crock (*Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland*) were popular among scholars and artists alike, kicking off an explosion of folklore books by Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould, Anna Eliza Bray, Joseph Jacobs, and many others. (The word "folklore" itself was coined in 1846.)

Two 19th-century European imports brought magical tales to an even wider audience: *German Popular Stories* by the Brothers Grimm, first published in England in 1823, and *The Fairy Tales of Hans Christian Andersen,* first published in 1846. These two collections went a long way to make fairy tales acceptable to Victorian readers—for although both books are darker in tone than the simplified Disney fare of today, they were not as dark or sensual as the older tales they drew upon. (The Brothers Grimm revised the folk tales they collected to reflect their own Protestant values, and Andersen's Danish fairy tales were unabashedly Christian.) Subsequent English fairy tale books continued this moralizing trend, taming the complexity and moral ambiguity of older fairy stories by turning their heroines into passive, modest, dutiful Victorian girls and their heroes into square-jawed fellows rewarded for their Christian virtues.

Throughout English history we find that when the untamed side of human nature was at its most repressed in polite society, it tended to erupt and express itself in obsessive and subversive forms. Thus, while we generally think of Victorian culture as rigid, pious, and strictly divided into hierarchies of class and gender (all of which is true), it was also a society obsessed by sex (there were more brothels in Victorian London than at any other time in its history), awash in alcohol and narcotics, and rife with subversive political ideas (such as socialism and feminism, both of which would dramatically change British culture in the century to come). While respectable Victorian society was as straight-laced as it could possibly be, among young artists and other rebels it was the heyday of British bohemianism—as exemplified by the colorful lives of painters like Dante Gabriel Rossetti, writers like Oscar Wilde, and aesthetes like Lady Ottoline Morrell, culminating in the notorious wine-and-women life of "gypsy painter" Augustus John. When we look at these twin cultural movements—strict morality and wild bohemianism—it is easier to understand another odd aspect of Victorian life, which was a widespread interest (despite Christian piety) in psychic phenomena and the occult. "Spiritualism" was a practice that flourished in all classes of society, right up to the Royal Court, in which "spirit mediums" enabled forms of contact with the spirits of dead. The fad was started in America by the Fox sisters in 1848, who claimed to communicate with the dear departed through mysterious knocks upon a table. They took this talent on tour and soon other spirit mediums followed suit, bringing American-style Spiritualism to England in 1852. Soon "table-turning" parties were all the rage, especially among idle, upper-class ladies and the recently bereaved. Spiritualist societies sponsored lecture tours, opened reading rooms, and published newspapers, while spirit mediums of both genders developed huge followings.

As the 19th century progressed, ghosts, goblins, sylphs, fairies, and other supernatural spirits not only visited parlors rich and poor through seances and oija boards, they also populated all areas of visual, literary, and performance art. In fine art, Shakespeare's fairies were re-imagined with the aid of folklore texts, inspiring paintings crowded with sprites in detailed natural settings. Richard Dadd, Richard Doyle, Frances Danby, Joseph Noël Paton, John Anster Fitzgerald, Daniel Maclise, Thomas Heatherly, and Eleanor Fortesque-Brickdale were just a few of the numerous artists who created an entire genre of Victorian Fairy Art—a genre that was not marginalized, as fantasy art tends to be today, but found in prestigious galleries and at the Royal Academy exhibitions. These were paintings for adults, not children, and they had subversive qualities. Fitzgerald's fairy imagery, for instance, was often dark and hallucinatory, full of references to opium pipes and opium medicines. (Opium derivatives such as laudanum, called "the aspirin of the 19th century," were available without prescription in England until 1868. They were commonly used for insomnia, headaches, and the pains of menstruation. It may perhaps be no accident that England's twin obsessions with fairies and Spiritualism occurred during the same span of years when casual opium use was widespread.) Many fairy paintings were distinctly salacious, such as Paton's huge canvases of luscious fairy maidens in various states of undress. At a time when public expression of sexuality was severely repressed, when medical "experts" proclaimed that respectable women were incapable of sexual pleasure, artists both male and female discovered that sensual scenes were acceptable just so long as all their nubile maidens sported gossamer fairy wings. The fairy fad among Victorian adults must also be



This illustration is from* In Fairyland, *the famous book created in collaboration between poet William Allingham and painter Richard Doyle (1896).

viewed in light of the rapid changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution, as Britain moved from the rhythms of its rural past to the mechanized future. With factories and suburban blight transforming huge tracts of English countryside, fairy paintings and stories were rich in nostalgia for a vanishing way of life. In particular, the art of the Pre-Raphaelites (Rossetti, Morris, Burne-Jones, etc.), based on Romance, legends, and myth, promoted a dreamy Medievalism and the aesthetics of fine craftsmanship to counter the ugly new world created by modern forms of mass production. ("For every locomotive they build, "vowed Edward Burne-Jones, "I shall paint another angel.") The Arts & Crafts movement, which grew out of Pre-Raphaelitism, embraced folklore to such a degree that by the end of the 19th century, fairies and popular fairy tale scenes were commonly found in middle-class homes in every form of decorative arts: wallpaper, draperies, ceramics, stained glass, metalwork, etc. At the dawn of the 20th century, lavish new fairy tale volumes were produced that turned illustration into a fine art by the likes of Arthur Rackham, Edmund Dulac, Kay Nielsen, Jessie M. King, Warwick Goble, Eleanor Vera Boyle, and the Robinson brothers. It was not until 1915, however, that the most famous fairy picture of the Victorian/Edwardian age appeared in exhibition in London: *The Piper of Dreams*, by the English-Italian artist Estella Canziani. Canziani, the daughter of fairy painter Louisa Starr, grew up among the Pre-Raphaelites and studied at the Royal Academy; her work drew on her interest in Italian folklore and peasant traditions. *The Piper of Dreams*, a wistful picture of a country boy surrounded by fairies, was published as a print by the Medici Society and became a runaway best-seller—a print as ubiquitous in England then as Monet's waterlilies are now. This gentle, forgotten fairy picture once rivaled Hunt's famous Biblical scene *The Light of the World* in popularity, and was a favorite among English soldiers in the trenches of World War I.

In the pre-television, pre-cinema world of the Victorians, theater, ballet, and opera had greater importance as forms of entertainment—as well as a greater influence on the visual and literary arts. In the 1830s, the new Romantic ballet (as opposed to formal, classical ballet) thrilled large audiences in London with productions that often dramatized tales of love between mortals and spirits. Aided by innovations in "point work" (i.e., dancing on the points of one's toes) and improvements in theater gas-lighting techniques, sumptuous fairylands were created in hit productions like *La Sylphide*, the tragic story of a mortal man in love with an elfin maid. In theater, fairy plays were staged with stunningly elaborate special effects, each new production striving to be even more spectacular than the last. Fairy music was another popular phenomenon, much of it imported from Germany—such as Weber's fairy opera *Oberon*, Hoffman's *Ondine* (based on Fouqué), Wagner's *Die Feen* (*The Fairies*), and Mendelssohn's overture for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Fairy music for the harp was composed and performed by charismatic musicians as popular then as pop stars are today—young women swooned and followed their favorite harpists from concert to concert. (This music can be heard on the CD *Harp of a Wild and Dreamline Strain* by the English harpist Elizabeth Jane Baudry; available in the U.S. through the Sylvia Woods Harp Center.) Magical music and dance reached their peak at the end of the 19th century in the works of Tchaikovsky, the brilliant Russian composer who took London (indeed, all of Europe) by storm. The popularity of his magical ballets (*Swan Lake, The Sleeping Beauty,* and *The Nutcracker)* was certainly enhanced in England by the public's love of all things fey.

Fairy music, dance, drama, and art ... these things all fused together to create an enchanted atmosphere, inspiring the writers of magical books that are now considered fantasy classics. Some of these works were written for adults, such as the "imaginary world" novels of William Morris (*The Well at the World's End),* the adult fairy tales of Anne Thackaray Ritchie (*Bluebeard's Keys and Other Stories*), and the adventure novels of H. Rider Haggard (*She*)—as well as the Arthurian

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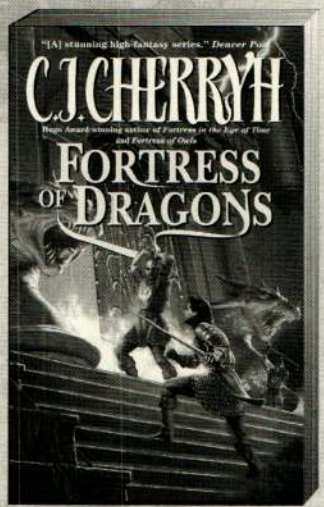


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poetry of Morris (*The Defense of Guenevere*) and Tennyson (*Idylls of the King*). But one of the major shifts we see in magical literature from the 19th century onward is that more and more of it was published in books intended for children. There are two major reasons why this shift occurred, despite the fact that adult fascination with fantasy and fairies had rarely been so high. First, the Victorians romanticized the very idea of "childhood" to a degree it had never seen before; earlier, childhood had not been viewed as something quite so separate from adult life. Children, according to this earlier view, came into the world in sin and had to be quickly, strictly civilized into God-fearing members of society. By Victorian times, this belief was changing to one in which children were inherently innocent, rather than inherently sinful—and childhood was thus a special Golden Age before the burdens of adulthood. (Our modern notion of childhood as a sheltered time for play and exploration is rooted in these Victorian ideals, although in the 19th century they held true only for the upper classes. Most Victorian children still labored long hours in fields and factories—as Charles Dickens portrayed in his fiction, and experienced as a child himself.) This romanticized view of childhood was paired with a romanticized view of rural life, in which country people were considered primitive and childlike themselves. Just as the "innocence" of the countryside was vanishing due to the Industrial Revolution, the golden innocence of childhood was doomed to vanish as a child matured. This is a theme that runs through many great works of Victorian fantasy, in which magic is accessible only to children and lost on the threshhold of adulthood. From Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books to J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, Victorian writers grieved that their young, wise heroes would one day grow up. (There is a darker side to this ideal, however, and some prominent Victorians were a little *too* interested in children. Lewis Carroll may or may not have been a closet pedophile, but he certainly had an uncomfortable interest in photographing scantily clad little girls; while John Ruskin fell in love with an eight-year-old, and constantly pestered his artist friend Kate Greenaway to send him drawings of unclothed "girlies." Kate declined.)

The second reason that Victorian publishers produced so many new volumes for children was due to the growth of a middle class that was both literate and wealthy. There was money to be made by exploiting the Victorian love affair with childhood; publishers had found a market, and they needed product with which to fill it. Children's fiction in the previous century had been diabolically dreary—consisting primarily of pious, tedious books full of moral instruction. By the 19th century, some educators were still decrying the evils of "immoral" fairy stories (using arguments that are much the same as the anti-Harry-Potter arguments made today), but once the Grimm and Andersen collections proved to be so popular, English publishers jumped on the fairy tale bandwagon in increasing numbers. Cheap story material was available to them by plundering the fairy tales of other lands, simplifying them for young readers, then further revising the stories to conform to Victorian gender roles and moral standards. A lot of these fairy tale volumes, marred by heavy-handed alterations, make abysmal reading today—but some retained enough of the magic of their source material to have stood the test of time, such as the famous series edited by Andrew Lang in partnership with his (unaccredited) wife: *The Blue Fairy Book, The Green Fairy Book, The Red Fairy Book*, etc.



The Maids of Elfen-Mere ***by Pre-Raphaelite artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1855) illustrates another fairy poem by Allingham. This drawing was much admired and strongly influenced a number of younger artists.***

In addition to retelling traditional fairy tales, the Victorians created original stories by using the tropes of folklore in innovative ways. From the middle of the century onward, some of the best writers of 19th-century England turned their hand to children's fiction: John Ruskin (*The King of the Golden River*, 1841), Charlotte Yonge (*The History of Tom Thumb*, 1855), Christina Rossetti (*The Goblin Market*, 1862), Charles Kingsley (*The Water Babies*, 1863), Lewis Carroll (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 1865), Jean Ingelow (*Mopsa the Fairy*, 1869), Edward Lear (*Nonsense Songs*, 1871), George Macdonald (*The Princess and the Goblin*, 1872), Mary Louisa Molesworth (*The Tapestry Room*, 1879), Mary de Morgan (*The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde*, 1880), Juliana Horatio Ewing (*Old-fashioned Fairy Tales*, 1882), Oscar Wilde (*The Happy Prince and Other Tales*, 1888), Ford Maddox Ford (*The Queen Who Flew*, 1894), Laurence Housman (*The House of Joy*, 1895), Evelyn Sharp (*The Other Side of the Sun*, 1900), Rudyard Kipling (*Puck of Pook's Hill*, 1906), J.M. Barrie (*Peter Pan in Kensington Garden*, 1906), Edith Nesbit (*The Enchanted Castle*, 1907), and Kenneth Grahame (*The Wind in the Willows*, 1908). Chances are that unless you've done more reading than most in the field of Victorian literature, you're probably more familiar with the men on the list above than with the women (with the possible exception of Rossetti or Nesbit.) As I prepared this article, a number of well-read friends asked me if there even *were* any female fantasy writers in 19th-century England. Indeed there were—so popular and financially successful in their day that as a group they incited the envy and approbation of many male colleagues. George Gissing's novel *New Grub Street*, for instance, published in 1891, paints a vicious portrait of an outspoken woman, vain and utterly talentless, who is lionized as a children's writer while the lives of "real" literary artists fall into ruin all around her. (Gissing's book portrays a view of literary women that was common in the 19th century, eerily similar in tone to the attacks on the female fairy tale writers of 17th-century Paris.) So if these women were so successful, why are the books by the men above still known and loved by children today while most of those by women are read only by feminist scholars? In addition to Victorian gender bias (in which works by women were considered less important, and thus not kept in print), another reason is that the tales by 19th-century women (like the ones from 17th-century Paris) make for less comfortable reading. Down through the centuries, fairy tales have often been used as a way of speaking, in symbolic language, about topics at odds with the dominant culture. For Victorian women, it was the totality of their lives at odds with the culture they lived in, hemmed in by 19th-century ideals of femininity, duty, and motherhood. What one finds over and over

again beneath the surface of magical stories by Victorian women is *anger*. This is addressed by folklorists Nina Auerbach and U.C. Knoepflmacher in their insightful book *Forbidden Journeys: Fairy Tales and Fantasies by Victorian Women*: "The most moving Victorian children's books are steeped in longing for unreachable lives. Lewis Carroll, George Macdonald, and J.M. Barrie envied the children they could not be; out of this envy came their painful children's classics. Most Victorian women envied adults rather than children. Whether they were wives and mothers or teachers and governesses, respectable women's lives had as their primary object child care. British law made the link between women and children indelible by denying women independent legal representation. [A woman could not marry, buy or sell property, control her own finances, sign a contract, or undertake any other commonplace legal action without the signature of a father, husband, or designated male authority.] As Frances Power Cobbe pointed out in a witty essay, 'Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors' were identical in the eyes of the law. In theory, at any rate, women lived the condition Carroll, Macdonald, and Barrie longed for. Yet in the years when the children's book industry was still new (and before Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung taught us to look at the subtext of fiction more closely), Victorian women had a freedom of expression unknown to children's book writers today. As long as their tales conformed outwardly to the conventions of popular children's fiction, they were able to populate their tales with extremely subversive characters and creatures, such as clever, hot-tempered female fairies and irascible, intractable heroines. It was not, however, just the women of England who used the writing of magical tales as a form of social critique, nor were they the only writers who challenged Victorian gender assumptions. As Jack Zipes points out in the introduction to his excellent collection, *Victorian Fairy Tales*, "There is a strong feminine, if not feminist, influence in the writing of *both* male and female writers. In contrast to the *Kunstmärchen* tradition in Germany and folklore in general, which were stamped by patriarchal concerns, British writers created strong women characters and placed great emphasis on the fusion of female and male qualities and equality between men and women." Zipes cites George Macdonald's work as an example of Victorian fantasy literature in which boys and girls alike develop qualities of intelligence, courage, and compassion—for magic, in Macdonald's tales, "is nothing else but the realization of the divine creative powers one possesses within oneself." In *Victorian Fairy Tales*, Zipes divides the magical fiction published from 1860 onward into two groups: the conventional and the utopian. Although a few good writers worked in the conventional mode, such as Jean Ingelow and Mary Louisa Molesworth, on the whole these were forget-

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table books full of twinkly fairies with butterfly wings and good little boys and girls who caused no disturbance to the status quo. Utopian fantasies, on the other hand, demonstrated (in Zipes' words) "a profound belief in the power of the imagination as a potent force" to change English society, and were being written by some of the finest writers of the day. Macdonald, Carroll, de Morgan, Ewing, Wilde, Housman, Kipling, Barrie, Nesbit (in her later works), and others created extraordinary tales that were archly critical of Victorian life, promoting the possibility of a better society. The prevalence of fantasy in this mode is explained by looking at the context of the culture that produced it—a society in the grip of great upheaval due to rapid industrialization. Fairies flittered across London stages and nested in bucolic scenes on gallery walls, but outside on the city streets it was a long, long way from Never Land, crowded with beggars, cripples, prostitutes (many of them children), and homeless, desperate men and women displaced by the new economy.



This illustration by Walter Crane is from The Baby's Bouquet: A Fresh Bunch of Old Rhymes and Tunes *(1878). Many of the fairy tale volumes published for children were retellings of old tales revised to conform to Victorian gender roles and moral standards.*

While the upper classes charmed themselves with fairy books and dancing nymphs and clapped to bring Tinkerbell back to life, among the lower classes (where the fairy faith still existed in living memory), fairies were seldom viewed as the sweet little moth-winged creatures of Victorian children's books—they were still the tricky, capricious, dangerous beings of the oral folk tradition. Throughout the 19th century, British newspapers still reported cases of fairy sightings, curses, and abductions. The most famous occurred as late as 1895 and riveted readers across the nation. This was the murder of Bridget Cleary, a handsome young woman in Ireland who was killed by her husband, family, and neighbors because they thought she was a fairy changeling. The facts are these: Bridget, a 26-year-old dressmaker, and her husband Michael, a cooper, lived in a comfortable cottage near her family home in southern Ireland. Bridget fell sick with an undiagnosed illness (it may have been simple pneumonia); within a few days she was feverish, raving, and (according to her husband) no longer looked like herself. When regular medicine did not help, the family called in a "fairy doctor"—for the cottage was located close to a fairy hill, which was bad luck. The "fairy doctor" confirmed that the ill woman was actually a fairy changeling and the real Bridget had been abducted, taken under the hill by the fairies as a consort or a slave. The doctor devised several ordeals designed to make the changeling reveal itself. Bridget was tied to the bed, forced to swallow potions, sprinkled with holy water and urine, swung over the hearth fire, and eventually burned to death by her increasingly desperate husband. Convinced it was a fairy he had killed and buried (with the aid of her family and neighbors), Michael then went to the fairy fort to wait for the "real" Bridget to ride out seated on a milk-white horse. Bridget's disappearance was soon noted, the body found, the crime brought to life, and Michael and nine others were charged and prosecuted for murder. Although the most flamboyant, this was far from the only case of changeling murder in the Victorian press, although usually the poor changelings were children, born with physical deformities or struck by sudden illness that caused the child to waste away.

A less gruesome but equally famous occurrence took place in Yorkshire in 1917, when Elsie Wright, 16 years old, and Frances Griffith, her 10-year-old cousin, contrived to take photographs of fairies in their garden at Cottingley. Three years later, Elsie's mother attended a Spiritualist lecture by a friend of a prominent Theosophist named Edward Gardner, which led to the photographs being sent to Gardner—and then on to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (creator of Sherlock Holmes and son of the fairy painter Charles Doyle). Although the photographs are rather unconvincing by today's standards (the fairies look one-dimensional, sporting the clothes and bobbed hairstyles of the day), professionals at the time could find no evidence of photographic doctoring. The pictures, championed by Doyle, caused an absolute sensation and brought the fairy craze well into the 20th century. Only when Elsie and Frances were old ladies (in the 1980s) did they admit that the Cottingley fairies were actually paper cut-outs held in place by hat pins. Yet their final deathbed statements on the subject were more ambiguous, implying that the fairies, and one of the photos, may have been real after all. In her fascinating book *Strange and Secret Peoples: Fairies and Victorian Consciousness*, Carol G. Silver suggests that the Cottingley photos, despite briefly reviving interest in fairies and fairy communication, were actually one of the factors that marked the end of the fairy art era. "Ironically," she says, "the photographs, the ostensible proof of the actual existence of the fairies, deprived the elfin people of the grandeur and their stature.... The theories that Gardner [and other Spiritualists] formulated to explain the fairies' nature and function reduced them to the intelligence level of household pets and the size of insects." In addition to this, the popularity that the fairies had enjoyed throughout the 19th century was enough to ensure that they would be branded old fashioned by following generations, particularly those whose "innocence" was trampled on by two world wars.

Various scholars give different dates for the end of England's Golden Age of Fairy Art, Literature, and Drama—just as folklore postulates different dates for "the flitting of the faeries," which is when, supposedly, the Fair Folk left British shores forever. In 1890, Fiona Macleod wrote that "the Gentle People have no longer a life [in] common with our own. They have gone beyond the gray hills. They dwell in far islands perhaps where the rains of Heaven and the foam of the sea guard their fading secrecies." In his famous poem "The Horns of Elfland," Tennyson wrote that even the echoes of elfin bugles were dying, dying, dying ... and yet, of course, the fairies never die. Despite these waves of departure and farewell, the green hills of the British Isles are still thickly populated by the elfin tribes, who seem to be thoroughly enjoying their present revival in popular culture. When one compares the many social issues common to both the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century and the technological revolution of our own (a changing economy, disappearing countryside, conflicting ideas about gender and class), it is no surprise that fairies and fantasy have made a comeback. As Silver notes, "To

believe or half-believe in fairies was, by the turn of the century, an expression of revolt against complex urbanized society, so tightly conscious of its manners and morals. Moreover, such a faith was a response to the conflict between society's demand for respectability and conformity and the forces of demonic energy that lie beneath the surface of human nature. Conservatives and radicals alike could find in such belief a cogent criticism of the age." She was talking about an older turn of the century, but her words could apply to the recent one as well. Magic is still alive in England: in books by writers like J.K. Rowling, Philip Pullman, Neil Gaiman, and Terry Pratchett; in art by painters like Brian Froud, Alan Lee, Patrick Woodruffe, and the Ruralists; in modern folk and folk-rock music; in film and on the stage. Prince Charles himself is a fan of fairies and admits belief in the Little People. The horns of Elfland are still blowing. Listen, and you will hear them.

FURTHER READING: In addition to the books listed above, try *Through the Looking Glass* edited by Jonathan Cott, *The Victorian Fairy Tale Book* edited by Michael Patrick Hearn, *The Fairies in Tradition and Literature* by Katherine Briggs, and *The Erotic World of Faery* by Maureen Duffy. Alison Lurie's entertaining book on subversive children's literature, *Don't Tell the Grown-ups*, contains chapters on E. Nesbit, Kate Greenaway, Beatrix Potter, J.M Barrie, and other 19th-century figures. For Alice fans, Karoline Leach's controversial new book, *In the Shadow of the Dreamchild*, discusses Lewis Carroll's life and art, challenging modern ideas about both. Additional volumes on Victorian children's fiction include: *Secret Gardens* by Humphrey Carpenter, *Victorian Fantasy* by Stephen Prickett, and *Breaking the Angelic Image: Woman Power in Victorian Children's Fantasy* by Edith Lazaros Honig. The Bridget Cleary murder is investigated in Angela Bourke's new book, *The Burning of Bridget Cleary*. To learn more about the Cottingley photographs seek out Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Coming of the Fairies*, as well as S.F. Sanderson's informative article *The Cottingley Fairy Photographs* (published in *Folklore* 84, summer 1973). These photographs inspired a novel (*Photographing Fairies* by Steve Syzilagy), an adult film of the same name, a lovely children's film (*A Fairy Tale*), and a spoof (*Lady Cottington's Pressed Fairy Book* by Brian Froud and Terry Jones.) For modern fiction directly inspired by 19th-century fantasy literature, try *Little, Big* by John Crowley, *Stardust* by Neil Gaiman, *The Kingdoms of Elfin* by Sylvia Towsend Warner, *Dark Cities Underground* by Lisa Goldstein, and *Possession* by A.S. Byatt. For a closer look at Victorian society, try John Fowles' brilliant novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. (It's not got a lick of fantasy in it, unless you count the delicious Pre-Raphaelite references, but it's enchanting nonetheless.) ❧

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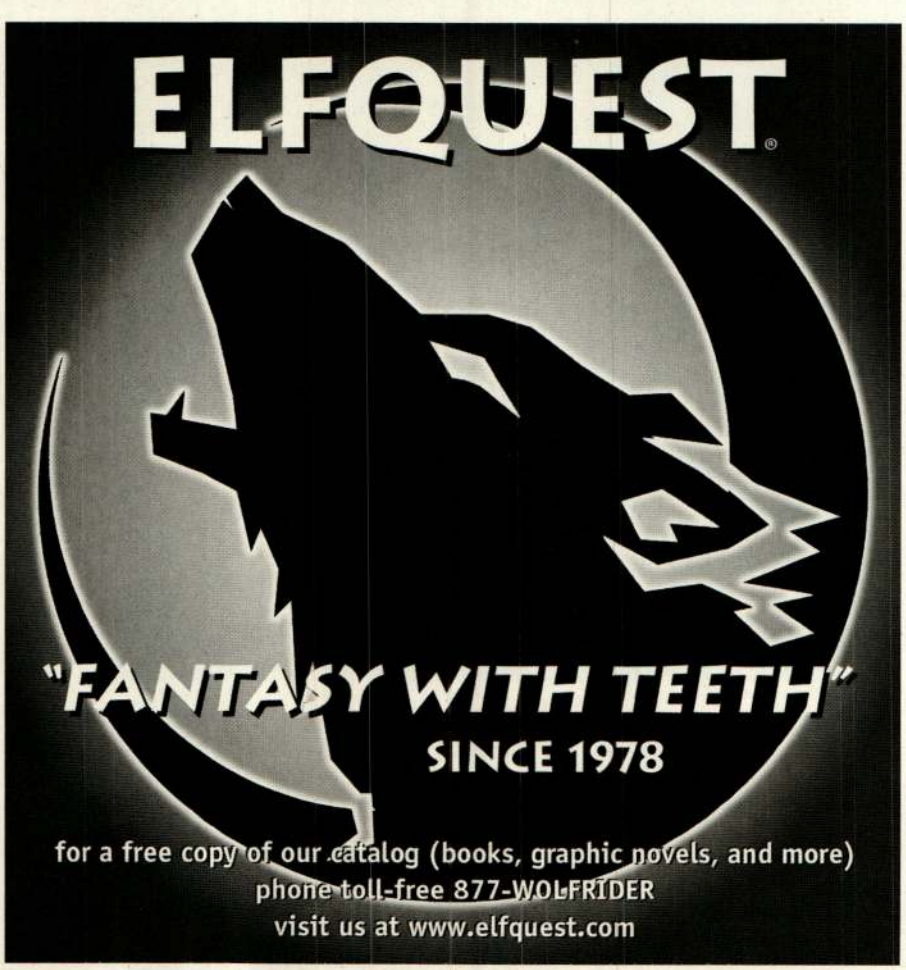
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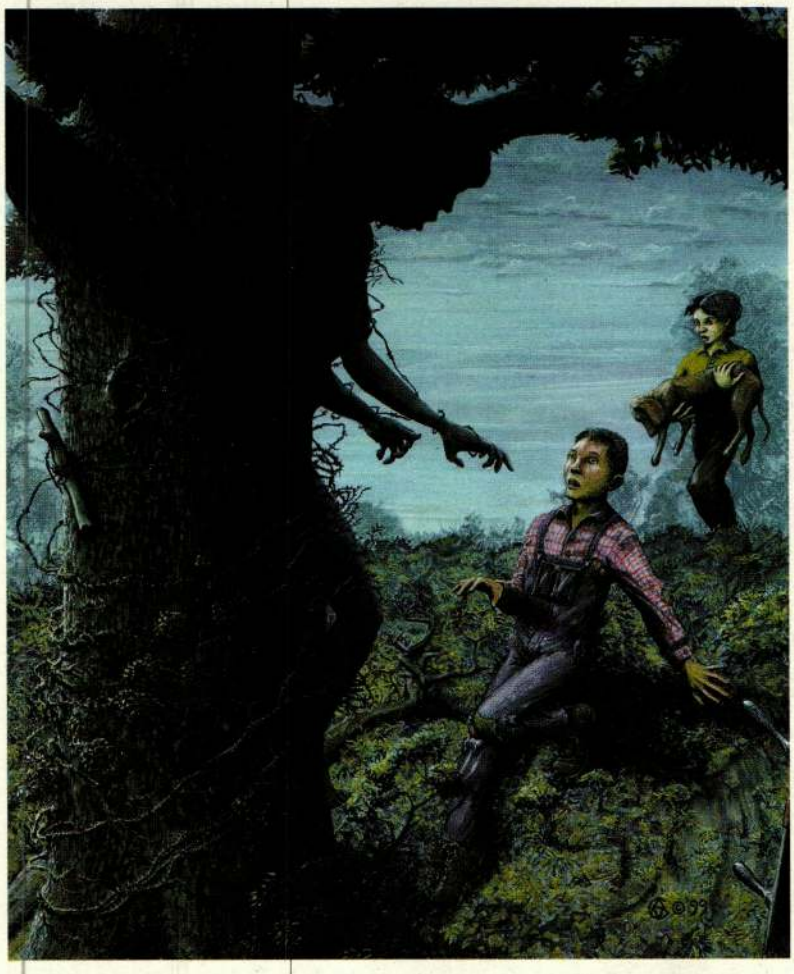


By Gahan Wilson

A vampire's life: The saga of Yarbro's Saint-Germain continues.

Classic vampires have always lured writers of the fantastic in droves and it is very understandable that they would since these appalling creatures combine in one monster two of humankind's most ancient and persistent fears: the bone-deep dread of being hunted down and eaten by some fanged predator sprung from that wild darkness which ever surrounds our fragile civilizations, and the creepy unease that is stirred in all of us by the cold bodies of our dead.

The original European folkloric vampire which has inspired most of the subsequent literary productions gave us the basics: a peasant dies and funerary rituals are either ignored (usually by not burying the body in consecrated ground) or fail to work their magic, and soon members of the deceased's community begin to expire of a mysterious wasting illness (commonly starting with the recent dead's most beloved; a nicely chilling touch I feel could be more often explored than it is by writers in the field), and when this continuing plague eventually leads to disinterment of the suspect the cadaver is found to be not only totally undecayed but ruddy and red-lipped if not actually swollen like a leech with blood. It goes without saying that the creature is either righteously pierced with a wooden stake or stabbed through its heart with a consecrated sword (I have examined one of these latter weapons preserved in a monastery in Romania and the number of notches carved into its handle gave resounding testimony to its enthusiastic usage!) after which its head is summarily chopped off and—if those in charge are truly prudent—its mouth is stuffed with garlic.



The dust jacket illustration for the special autographed edition of The Bottoms *by Joe R. Lansdale, reviewed by Gahan Wilson. The illustration is by Alan Clarke.*

This relatively crude form of vampire began to resemble the sort most popular nowadays in fiction when John William Polidori, who was briefly Lord Byron's physician, decided to steal the essentials of a sort-of-but-not-really vampire story Byron had written for the legendary contest between Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Mary Shelley which inspired Mary to write *Frankenstein*, and to turn Byron's antihero it into a really-and-truly vampire story (called *The Vampyre: A Tale*) starring a spiffed-up vampire which was not only totally nonpeasant but which featured all the spectacular elegance and intimidating worldliness of Lord George Gordon Byron, himself. The arrival of today's basic full-rigged vampire came a few years later when Bram Stoker took inspiration from the ramblings of a Romanian scholar friend and grafted the gentrified Polidori model onto the gothically fearsome but entirely historical Prince Dracula, thereby granting the fictitional vampires that followed not only a lot more class but the spooky advantage of having a potentially limitless lifetime.

I am sure at least a couple of the numerous and highly competitive vampire experts which the creation of this marvelous imaginary creature produced have put together and continually update a complete list, but I myself have no idea how many books and short stories this new and improved model of vampire has inspired. Of course, following Theodore Sturgeon's famous law that 95 percent of anything is shit (or did he say 99 percent?) the major part of this output is pretty bad but—thanks to the truly primordial force of the basic notion—a sizable part of the stuff I have read is at least passable entertainment; a fair chunk of it really not bad at all, and a tiny, precious bit downright excellent.

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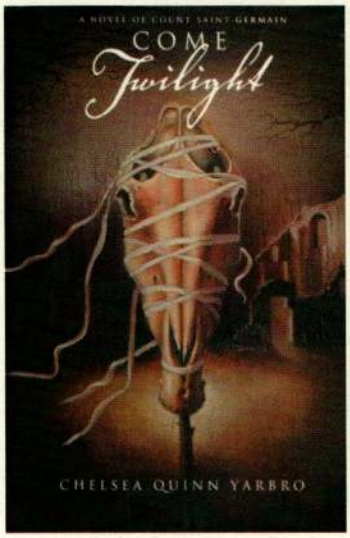
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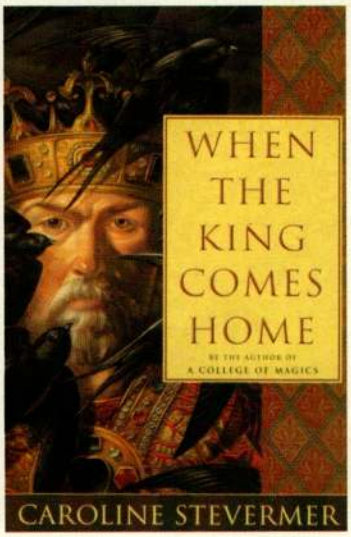
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The problem with the vast majority of even the best of these tales is that though they be well written, sometimes even very well written, and though they invent and present all sorts of really clever new wrinkles as to how vampires come to be vampires, how they play their spooky tricks on us, and even how they go about sucking our blood, the great bulk of them are essentially only a kind of retelling of the same fine old legend, a new campfire recitation of the unfortunate things that would happen if one of us ran into one of the best supermonsters our species ever invented. We enjoy them thoroughly in the same manner little children enjoy their favorite fairy tales, but we are not ever really surprised by them. We know what will happen next.





Back in 1978 Chelsea Quinn Yarbro started changing all of that when she wrote *Hotel Transylvania*, a novel which introduced and began to reveal something of her truly unique vampire, Saint-Germain, and her equally unique benign attitude toward him. Now, in the year 2001, after having written at least a dozen more books about him, she has continued the saga with *Come Twilight, A Novel of Saint-Germain* (by Tor Books, NYC; 479 pp.; hardcover; $27.95) and in it she has deepened and clarified and brought into focus what she's been up to all these years and, having read it, I confess I have never seen the Count more clearly, nor liked him more, nor better understood numerous subtleties of what Yarbro's been up to all along.

In previous novels and stories the action has taken place in one small segment or another of Saint-Germain's 4,000-year life. True, there are almost always flashbacks of one kind or another and we often see that a great deal of the present action only takes place because of something lingering on from what Saint-Germain has done hundreds of years before, but we are usually in and out of the tale well within an ordinary mortal's span of life.

Come Twilight breaks entirely new ground by starting the action in 620 AD and ending it in "the Pope's year"1133, which is to say that this time we do not flit in and out of Saint-Germain's life, we survive alongside of him for more than five hundred years, an inhumanly long period of time. We see whole ways of life rise and fall, we hear names and languages change, we deal in turn with Romans, Visigoths, and Moors as they battle over the Iberian peninsula, and finally find ourselves intimately involved with and firmly under the hand of the tricky and ruthless King who will make Spain determinedly Christian. Everything exists only to melt away and be replaced by something new. Clothes, food, and even the ecology itself is seen to be in constant flux.

Throughout this series Yarbro has always made grand use of history but in this book its sweep dominates everything completely and

Books to Watch For

The Fires of Merlin, by T.A. Barron, Ace paperback, $5.99. Book Three of "The Lost Years of Merlin" does not disappoint. *The Cincinnati Enquirer* tells "young sorcery fans ... set aside Harry Potter and pick up Merlin." The descendant of the great wizard Merlin who first defeated the dragon called "Wings of Fire," is the only one who can defeat this same creature upon its awakening. A tale of myth, humanity, and enchantment—this story will be savored and shared by all who fall under the spell of its pages. Author Barron won an ALA Best Book for Young Adults with this series.



Blair Witch, The Secret Confession of Rustin Parr, by D.A. Stern, Pocket Books trade paperback, $11.95. This book purports to reveal new insight into the Blair Witch Legend. Fans of the original movie and those who wish to gain insight into its sequel (released last summer) will be fascinated and frightened anew with the confessions of Rustin Parr, a hermit convicted of murdering seven children in his house just outside of Burkittsville, Md. The night before he is to be hanged for the murders, a chillingly different account of what happened is revealed to Father Dominick Cazale. D.A. Stern is the journalist who compiled "The Blair Witch Project Dossier," and is preparing a third "prequel" tale of the haunted woods in Burkittsville.

Darkspawn, by Lois Tilton, Hawk Publishing Group paperback, $15.95. This is an innovative tale of Horror by author Lois Tilton who has also published her short fiction in *Realms*. Lord Emre Bakhany is vampire prince of Kharithyna. "Vampire-as-hero" in this tale, he awakens from a burial of centuries before, alive but half-crazed. His world is not as he left it, instead overrun with barbarians of murderous intent. Vampire powers must be applied to the good when Lord Emre emerges as hero and savior to reclaim his rightful position. A book rich with detail and originality—for fans of Horror, Fantasy, and Science Fiction alike.



The Boris Vallejo Portfolio, Paper Tiger distributed by Sterling Publishing Company, $21.95. Twenty-eight of Vallejo's works are collected within the pages of this visually stunning book. Called a master of "the mythical and the fantastical," Vallejo combines the modern and the prehistoric in works such as "Tattoo" and "Dumell." An illustrator of some renown, often featured on the cover of *Realms*, and generating lots of reader response ... this Vallejo collection is alluring, provocative, and above all imbued with heroic Fantasy. Boris says much of his work is "instinctive" and the visual impact of this artist's fantastical instinct shines through.

Mermaids and Magic Shows: The Paintings of David Delamare, Paper Tiger distributed by Sterling Publishing Company, $21.95. Text by Nigel Suckling. Surreal and imaginative, Delamare's paintings are said to differ from other Fantasy/Sci-Fi art, not in content, but in style. Deadly sirens, irresistible mermaids, beautiful mythical creatures and scenarios can be found within this marvelous and mysterious book. Sometimes eerie, sometimes erotic, his theatrical art spins a tale at just a moment's glance ... tales that may make one shiver in delight, or perhaps instead, pull the covers up over one's head. An English-born artist, Delamare's projects have included a collaboration with singer/songwriter Carly Simon, as well as the illustrations for several children's classics. Delamare's work is truly a feast for the eye and the imagination. ❧

you see as in none of the prior books and with vastly increased understanding how, were you an ageless vampire, you would—in spite of your most persistent and resolute efforts to the contrary—come in the end to take the very long view on all topics up to and decidedly including your own importance.

A hugely important aspect of Yarbro's hero is that even though we mostly experience him as a determinedly kindly creature, one ever attentive to the hurts of the fragile mortals about him and always desirous of curing them, we are told and sometimes shown during the course of the many books in this saga how he spent a very long time indeed during his vampire youth being as gruesome and horrific a creature of the night as any author ever created and that it was finally the crush of years and the sight of so much cruelty, very much including his own, that flattened his raging and drove him at last into gentleness.

But do not let me mislead you into thinking that Yarbro's message is gentle assurance that even the worst monster will see the error of his or her ways given a sufficient passage of time. In *Come Twilight* the always well- intentioned Saint-Germain encounters strong evidence to the contrary when he encounters one of the most spectacularly bloody-minded and incurably nasty undead ever to stalk the dark.

The monster goes under a series of names as the centuries pass—Csimenae, Chimenae, Chimena, Ximene—but her mercilessness always keeps its razor-sharp edge and her firm conviction that she alone should always prevail does not veer an inch despite any amount of experiences indicating a contrary possibility.

The most dismal thing about this truly dreadful creature so far as Saint-Germain is concerned is that he is the one who transformed her from an ordinary mortal in order to save her life—he found her pregnant and profoundly ill in a deserted village—and he feels responsible not only for her increasingly horrific actions but for her desperate, though highly unlikely, need of salvation.

She brushes off his patient teaching and instruction as she would so many flies and, despite his best efforts to mend the situation during highly dramatic and often extremely dangerous encounters with her over the centuries, she only grows increasingly adept at villainy and ever more determined that the vampire tribe she is industriously begetting and enlarging will perfect their reign of terror over the benighted she views as her personal section of Catalonia.

A wonderfully entertaining book and I guarantee that if you read it you will come to view dear old Saint-Germain—though I know it's hard to believe—with even more affection than you have before.

The Wooden Sea *by Jonathan Carroll; Tor Books, NYC; hardcover; 304 pp.; $23.95*

I find when I receive a new book by Jonathan Carroll that I open it with something like the same mood I used to open Christmas presents as a child.

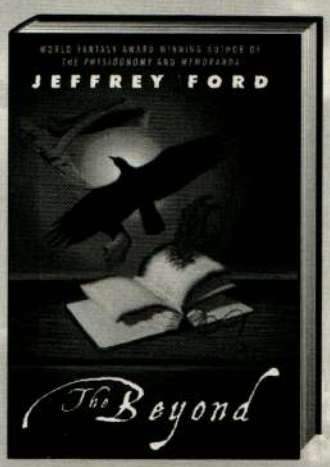
I remember I used to be very careful with the wrappings of those pretty boxes which struck me as being particularly promising. I would not tear the paper off; I would hunt and carefully loosen the places where it had been taped or glued and peel them open gently so as to damage the wrapping as little as possible. I would expose the contents slowly so that the exposure would not be a hasty blur but a clear unveiling which would allow my eyes to fully absorb the miraculous process of absorbing in the wonder being revealed.

Carroll always cooperates fully with this approach. He understands that you must work your way into his books because their understandings are complex and peculiar and not all that easy to absorb. He is careful and kind. He breaks the news to you very gently.

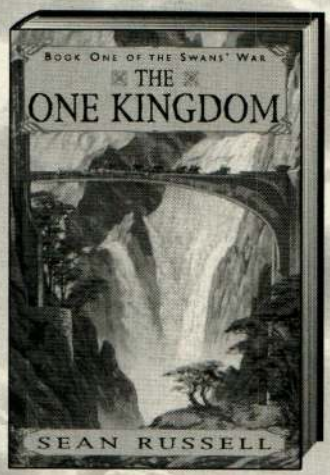
He also understands the importance of alerting you, of waking you up. That's the package-wrapping part, the fun of working out untying the complex bows in the beautiful ribbons, the startling encounters with bright colors in the crinkly paper. He knows he's going to show you strangeness so he's got to nudge your mind out of its rut.

The first serious nudge in *The Wooden Sea* is your introduction to a wonderfully battered ugly dog found sleeping in the parking lot of

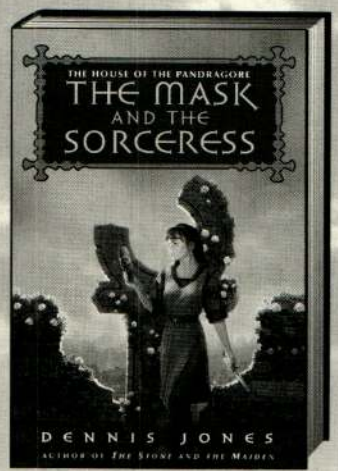
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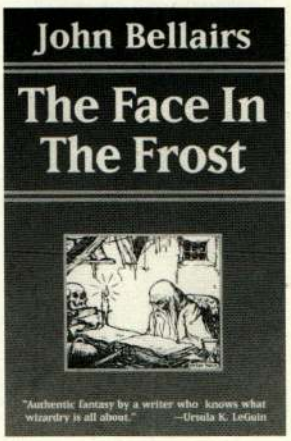
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the Grand Union in the upstate New York village of Crane's View. The dog is carried to the police station by a kindly soul and forthwith adopted by Police Chief Frannie McCabe. The dog's only identification is the name "Old Vertue" carved into a silver heart hanging from a nice red collar. He's missing one eye, half a leg and when he breathes an old mouth injury makes it sound like he's softly whistling "Michelle."



When Frannie's beautiful wife Magda and Magda's shy daughter Pauline (whom Frannie has secretly and sadly nicknamed "Fade") come to Frannie's office in order to view the new arrival, Old Vertue startles them all by suddenly standing up and dying. He startles Frannie in particular by winking directly at him and no one else as if the two of them shared a secret. Frannie carefully wraps Old Vertue in a blanket and takes the ugly old dog through a gaggle of amused policemen and drives away to bury him.

There's a lot about graves and burying in *The Wooden Sea* and a lot about digging things up. The graves behave in weird ways, however: Things don't stay buried in them and inexplicable, unexpected things turn up in them. A strange multicolored feather, for instance, appears and vanishes in various graves. You have to find just the right spot to dig a grave or you'll spend the whole night hacking through roots.

The Wooden Sea definitely has the mood and feel of a very tough detective story. The bulk of the book is narrated by Frannie, who is a very tough guy, in a fine *film noir* tone of voice. It decidedly *is* a mystery story, and a very splashy one. There are sinister agents galore; an ominous international villain and his lookalike-actalike son; suicides which may be killings; murderous invasions of public places and chapter headings which affectionately play the same sort of games Chandler and the other top private eyers used to enjoy: "The Hangman's Shove"; "Cat Folding"; "Lions for Breakfast"; and "At Home in the Electric Chair."

The tone of the book is now and then extremely dark but the offhand jokes that keep coming from the corners of everybody's mouth are among the best and funniest of Carroll's I've ever read and Carroll is a very funny guy.

The thing that really sets this book apart from all the others I've read by Carroll is that—somber as it sometimes is and bleak as many of the things mediated upon in it occasionally are—the essential, underlying feel throughout the work is basically jaunty. Loved ones may die or skirt too near death's edge; brave, good plans may fail miserably and villainy appear to triumph but our hero keeps on truckin'; and at the final curtain even total tragedy can be whirled on and faced down proudly. There *is* a way to victory. We and ourselves *can* find each other, join and win.

I suspect that in *The Wooden Sea* Carroll has not only topped himself—he may just be getting started!

The Face in the Frost *by John Bellairs; Olmstead Press, Chicago, IL; hardcover; 176 pages; $14.95*

A number of the fantasies for young readers (and everybody else with a brain in their head) of John Bellairs are still in print but his legendary *The Face in the Frost* has been unavailable for a decade and we all owe the deepest congratulations to the Olmstead Press for making this little gem once more available.

Bellairs was one of those rare ones who seem to be able to effortlessly breathe Fantasy into every word he penned. He could pile wonder upon wonder without a single one of them toppling. There is a rare smoothness to his imagination which is wonderful to behold.

Things move along in his books as he had the easy-seeming knack of building sequences



which pull you deeper and deeper into his dreamings, tagging after his amusing heroes, so that it is sometimes a bit of a struggle emerging from them in order to find your way out of the bus or answer a suddenly ringing phone.

This story is a deceptively simple account of how two lovable yet formidable wizards, Prospero and Roger Bacon, managed to track down the source of a strange and genuinely spooky evil spreading deeper and wider over the land and what happened when they found themselves face to face with its source. It ranges from dippy talking mirrors to cozy little villages nightmarishly transformed to occasional shocking glimpses of evil which you will never manage to completely shake.

They say it about far, far too many books but this one is one of those very rare ones which is, indeed, working up there in the Tolkien strata.

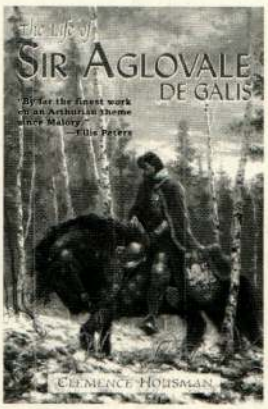
It's out. It's doubtless a small printing. Make your move.

The Bottoms *by Joe R. Lansdale; Subterranean Press, Burton, MI; hardcover; pages; $150 signed, limited; $400 signed, lettered*

This is a specially produced, absolute one-shot autographed edition of a book which originated as a novella titled *Mad Dog Summer* and was printed as a novel in an expanded version in a trade edition by Avon in 1999. I have read neither of these prior editions, only this one.

This is a spooky coming-of-age story of gruesome and horrible events that takes place in West Texas during the early 1930s in the time of the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl, and many other crushers of poor folk too numerous to mention. It is one of those books which obviously springs from deep within the author's heart and I found it to have a sweetness and tenderness—for all its spectacular gore and horror—which is genuinely touching.

Although primarily an account of how a series of ghastly serial killings affected the little family Lansdale focuses on, the core of the tale also very much concerns the grotesque injustices which were routinely the lot of African Americans at that time.



When I picked the book up to read it I assumed it was essentially a Fantasy but it is a classic Gothic tale in that while throughout its whole mood is dominated by the characters' fearsome speculations based on local superstitions of the time, it turns out that in the end all the horrors have logical explanations. For example: Those sheeted, hooded figures lynching innocents in the night are not ghosts.

If they had been ghosts we could all sleep better of nights.

In any case, I was touched by the book, moved by Lansdale's deep sincerity, and recommend it even if it is, technically, not Fantasy.

Gahan Wilson

When the King Comes Home *by Caroline Stevermer; Tor Books, NYC; hardcover; 236 pp.; $22.95*

Since the death of Avram Davidson, no one writes a better Ruritanian Fantasy than Caroline Stevermer. What kind of fantasy, you may well ask, is that? Ruritania was the name of an imaginary earthly kingdom invented by Anthony Hope in his *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1894), where heroics yet reigned. Since then, the term has been applied to any tale set in a never-never-land that intersects with more familiar countries. Think of a world where Bohemia has a seacoast, and you'll summon up the proper feeling.

Stevermer's latest excursion along these lines (which is linked to her previous novel, *A College of Magics* [1994] by mention of the neighboring country Galazon) is narrated by a lady as intriguing as any you will have encountered in years. Reminiscent of a Peter

Continued on page 80



The line between shame and dishonor is a thin one,
but it can be very important.

REDMOND'S PRIVATE SCREENING

Sharper than any barber's straight razor, the edge of the samurai blade nicked the skin, drew blood.

The director hissed in surprise, frowning at his cut finger, then laughed at himself.

"How'd you like to slice that across your belly, Mikey?"

As his assistant Michael Kendai watched, Redmond held the blade up to the bright

California sunlight that streamed into the makeshift studio through open windows and a cobwebbed skylight.

"The katana is real, sir, a century old. More than just a prop."

BY KEVIN J. ANDERSON
ILLUSTRATION BY JON FOSTER



Forged in 1811, eh?"

He didn't sound impressed. "It's just a sword."

Outside, the muffled sounds of motorcar traffic echoed along the dirt streets. One of the rattling vehicles backfired, and someone shouted obscenities in coarse Italian. Horses clopped by, pulling a late-morning milk cart. In his tiny warehouse studio, Michael knew that Redmond never noticed any outside distractions. He was too caught up in finding interesting things to shoot with his motion-picture camera, and he would never believe the doomsayers who claimed that nickelodeon audiences were tired of seeing marvels on celluloid film.

"Where did you get this samurai Taka-what's-his-name?" Redmond spoke as if the young Japanese man and his elderly parents weren't already right there beside him. The immigrants spoke no English, remained apart from the conversation; but they knew full well the business matters being discussed. "And how did you talk him into doing Harry Carry in front of the motion-picture camera?"

Michael folded his hands together, frowned at Redmond's unkempt appearance, mussed red-brown hair, and pungent cologne. He gave the director a look that plainly said, Not many people try my patience, but you are one of them. "Akira Takahashi came to me of his own free will and volunteered his performance of hara-kiri."

He looked around the small back-room studio, not eager to begin, but they would lose the best sunlight soon. The glass cyclopean eye of his hand-cranked movie camera stood watching the young samurai. A spare camera (which didn't work anyway) leaned against a corner.

Takahashi sat in bright robes, cross-legged on the white blanket he had spread out for himself on top of the sour sawdust. His pate had been shaved in the traditional fashion, his straight, black hair gathered in a ponytail at his neck. The old father, holding a worn, nicked sword of his own, squatted stony-faced beside his son, staring straight ahead. Only the wrinkled mother showed fear and anger, flashing tears at Redmond.

Michael explained, "Mr. Takahashi wishes to book steamer passage back to Japan for his parents, and he can think of no other way to raise the money. He considers it a fair exchange."

Redmond laughed nervously. His face had too many freckles, his skin was too pasty, his personality too slippery. "A lot of people are trying to get into this new movie business, but not usually by killing themselves on film." He sheathed the blade and handed the slim katana back.

Michael frowned at how low he himself had fallen, how disappointed the spirits of his own dead family must be. "Most directors do not wish to photograph such a spectacle either, and most patrons do not wish to see the result. But there are exceptions everywhere." He gave Redmond a cold stare. "You and I know how to find them."

The director raised his chin, pontificating. "Fifteen years ago, people flocked to nickelodeons to see a man sneeze, to watch a waterfall, or a running horse. Today, we've got to give them something more for their money, eh?"

"I'm sure we do."

With a deaf ear for his assistant's sarcasm, Redmond strutted around the floor, looking at the natural light, at the position of the white blanket, but Michael had already set everything up perfectly. The three Japanese followed the director with their eyes, like animals in a cage.

"If they liked it so much in Japan, why'd they come to Hollywood in the first place, eh?" Redmond whispered, as if he didn't want the family to hear.

Michael drew a deep breath. "Many well-to-do samurai families were ruined in the overthrow of the last Shogun in 1868. Akira's father tried to earn a living in the new Japanese National Army, but he could not tolerate the army's lack of traditional honor. His eldest son, Akira's brother, entered the Japanese Navy and was killed five years ago in the Russo-Japanese War. Akira and his parents then fled to America, but they found no opportunities here. Now they are destitute and wish only to go home to die."

"Well, we'll help them out then, eh?" Redmond removed a folded piece of paper from his trouser pocket. "I drew up a simple contract for Mr. Samurai. Get him to sign it, and we can start shooting." He looked critically at the slanting daylight in the studio. "Read it to him, if you like."

Michael glanced over the contract; it looked as if Redmond had done the typing himself. He formally presented the samurai with his sword, then spoke rapidly in Japanese, explaining the contract and its purpose. The young man drew himself up, glared at Redmond, and answered Michael sharply.

"He doesn't understand the need for a contract." Michael turned to Redmond. "He asks if you are questioning his honor, if you doubt he will do as he has promised."

"What?" Redmond was oblivious to nuances. "The contract's for his protection, not mine."

Michael relayed the information. The old mother spoke quickly, while her son stared down at the curved sword in its sheath. "They ask why they should not trust you. Are you not an honorable man?

Redmond made an exasperated sound. "Mikey, just explain to them I need to have it in writing that he's fully aware of what he's doing, that he offered his services willingly, and that I did not seek him out. What does he care anyway, eh? He's going to be dead."

Michael considered for a moment, then spoke in Japanese again. "I told him it was our custom to require such agreements. They have a great respect for customs and traditions." Finally, Takahashi took the contract and signed.

Redmond rolled his eyes and tucked the signed paper into his pocket. He clapped his hands for attention. "OK, let's get this show on the road."

Michael took up his position behind the tripod, checking the lens, making sure the celluloid reel was loaded properly. Due to the questionable legality of his projects, Redmond involved as few people in the productions as possible. Michael had become accustomed to

"During hara-kiri, a samurai is permitted to have a close friend stand beside him. Once he has succeeded in cutting open his belly, the friend is allowed to strike off his head, releasing him from the terrible pain."

cranking the camera himself.

Sunlight poured through the fly-specked skylight, flooding the blanket spread on the floor. Akira Takahashi blinked in the glare. The handle of the katana looked like molten silver. Redmond didn't have to tell anyone what to do.

The old mother moved out of the light to where she could watch. The elder Takahashi drew himself taller, holding his own sword in one hand. He waited just behind and to the right of his son.

"Mikey, what's the old guy doing with a sword?" Redmond asked.

"He is the kaishaku." Michael paused just long enough to emphasize how little Redmond understood about what was going to take place. "During hara-kiri, a samurai is permitted to have a close friend stand beside him. Once he has succeeded in cutting open his belly, the friend is allowed to strike off his head, releasing him from the terrible pain."

Redmond's eyes widened. "You mean the old man is going to chop off—oh, fantastic! You didn't tell me that before."

Michael scowled, then erased the expression. By participating in this heinous act, he felt as if he were betraying the Takahashi family—but he was giving them what they wanted. Even with his rationalizations, he disgusted himself.

Michael looked through the camera and signaled to Takahashi that everything was ready. The young samurai held the gazes of his parents for a long moment, then he took up the sword. Michael began to turn the crank, recording every second on the clicking ribbon of film.

Takahashi pulled the katana from its sheath, never taking his eyes from the steel. The traditional samurai sword had been crafted by one of the finest Zen swordmakers, displaying an edge that consisted of half a million layers of folded steel, so sharp it seemed to slice rays of sunlight.

Takahashi took a white cloth from his father and wrapped it around the blade close to the hilt, leaving five inches of naked metal. He placed the wrapped katana on the blanket in front of him so he could proceed without taking his eyes from it. He never blinked while he undid the sash of his ceremonial robe, baring his chest. His stomach muscles were firm and tense.

Maintaining an even, smooth motion, Michael turned the camera crank as queasiness built within him. If a blade had plunged into his own belly, a swarm of butterflies would have emerged....

Takahashi stared into space. Moving by itself, his hand picked up the katana again, flipped it around so that its point rested against his abdomen. Michael saw the smallest of tremors in his throat, as if he were trying not to swallow.

For long moments he did not breathe. Everything stopped, like a still from a motion picture. The father stood like a statue behind his son, sword raised and waiting. The ancient mother stared wide-eyed, but made no sound.

Redmond fidgeted. "What's he waiting for?"

"Shut up, Redmond."

Takahashi uttered an animal sound and thrust five inches of the blade into the left side of his abdomen. He made an astonished, coughing sound. He sat rigid, frozen again.

Crimson soaked into his bright robe, dribbled onto his leg. Spasms flickered across his face, betraying the pain. Takahashi's hands became slippery with blood, but he managed to keep his grip on the handle.

He used both hands against the back of the blade to push the cutting edge across his stomach in a gash that grew wider like a grotesque smile. His face turned gray and wet, and his breathing had no rhythm at all.

Michael continued to turn the camera crank. Redmond stared, silent with awe and fascination.

Takahashi's body shuddered as the blade cut below his navel. He gave another, weaker cry and wrenched the blade the rest of the way across.

Michael's world turned red and fuzzy. Black things swam in his stomach and his eyes; sweat trickled down his forehead. His knees turned to water, but at least he didn't topple the camera. Redmond saw him faint, muttered a curse, and pushed him out of the way. He began cranking the camera himself.

Takahashi's body convulsed as if he were trying to vomit, and intestines spilled out into his lap like gray, white, and red eels. His eyes pushed away their glassy bleariness and widened upon seeing all that had been kept neatly inside of him. He made a gurgling sound.

"Seppuku!" the old man cried and brought down his sword, striking off his son's head. The dead samurai collapsed into a heap of blood and mismatched flesh. The old man fell to his knees.

"Perfect!" Redmond said, and stopped filming.

Two days later, Michael found Redmond waiting for him in a booth at the back of the café, adding too much sugar to his mug of coffee. Michael felt bone-weary and ragged. "The funeral pyre was very difficult to arrange, Redmond."

The director scowled up from his plate of fried eggs. "I don't care how hard it was, Mikey, you're not getting any more money for it. We've got a written agreement."

Michael let out a disgusted sigh as he sat down. "I was merely stating a fact." Seeing Michael's Japanese features, the waiter ignored him.

Redmond stirred his coffee, oblivious to how his spoon clanged against the mug. He whistled for the waiter to bring coffee for Michael. "So why did you go to all that trouble, if it was so difficult? That part wasn't written into the contract."

The waiter brought a silver pot over, then left scowling when Michael ordered tea instead. Michael leaned across the sticky tabletop. "Redmond, we killed their son. We owed it to them."

"What is someone with a conscience doing in this business?" Redmond tried to laugh, then took a bite out of his jam-smeared toast. "Besides, we didn't kill the guy. If his parents didn't want him to do it, they could have stopped him at any time." He slurped his coffee, then spooned in more sugar.

"Not in Japanese culture, Redmond. Once a son comes of age, the parents must follow his wishes. Mr. Takahashi decided to send his mother and father home. They had no choice in the matter." The waiter returned with Michael's tea. Absently, after the man had left, he took a sugar cube and laid it on his saucer, crushing it with the rounded bottom of his spoon, then tapped the sugar into his tea. "Their steamer should have departed for Japan at dawn today."

"You haven't heard yet, eh?" Redmond snickered, another bite of toast poised halfway to his mouth. "The old man was so excited that he dropped stone dead on the dock. Spilled Junior's ashes all over the place. Can you imagine the expression on the old lady's face?"

Michael stopped stirring his tea and looked straight into Redmond's muddy green eyes, searching for some sign of a practical joke. "How do you know this? Why did no one tell me?"

"Nobody could find you! As far as I know, you disappear off the face of the Earth when you don't want to be found. I got a telegram from a flustered delivery boy. Seems he'd been running all over Hollywood looking for you."

Michael remained silent for so long that Redmond began to fidget. The family had already been through so much. Michael finally muttered, as if speaking to himself, "Their eldest son died fighting the Russian Navy for Liaotung Peninsula. On his last birthday, after he'd been gone for months on the battleship *Miyako*, the family set

out an extra bowl of rice to honor him. And the son sent his spirit across the sea to join them for the meal. They laughed and talked, but with moonrise the spirit returned to the ship." He lowered his voice to a whisper. "That night, the *Miyako* struck a mine in the Sea of Japan and sank."

Redmond took another bite of his runny eggs. "You mean the ghost appeared even before the son was killed? Just what were they doing for their little celebration? Smoking opium pipes?"

"Opium is from China, Redmond, not Japan." With an effort, Michael regained his patience. "Vengeful ghosts are common in our tradition. Anyone who dies violently is certain to haunt those who caused him to suffer. But the Japanese don't believe a person needs to be dead to send his spirit wandering. The family Takahashi truly believes they dined with the elder son on the eve of his death."

"Aww, tug my heartstrings." Then Redmond narrowed his eyes at Michael. "Oh, I see, you're trying to scare me that Mr. Samurai's ghost is coming to get me. Forget it, Mikey. He volunteered. You brought him to me."

Michael didn't bother to respond. He stood up, leaving Redmond to pay for his unfinished tea. "Is that all you wanted to see me about?"

Redmond smiled. "I'll be screening my samurai picture in three days, and I need you to run the projector. I've found a private room and five men sufficiently bored with the nickelodeons. They'll pay $10 each, if I can deliver what I've promised. Some are worried it might be trick photography, like George Meliós might do."

"Meliós never showed a man disemboweling himself." Michael let no ironic expression show. "Besides, Redmond, who could question your honesty?"

Redmond grinned, then scowled, then drank his coffee.

Redmond insisted on keeping the door locked and the screening room dim, lit only by tasteless red lights behind incense burners. Even more tasteless was his decision to use Takahashi's white blanket—laundered to remove most of the bloodstains—as a projection screen.

Michael mounted the single celluloid reel on the projector as Redmond ushered his clients to flimsy wooden chairs in the room. The director wore a ridiculous Japanese robe, as if to create the proper ambience.

Michael inspected the five men, who didn't bother to notice the Japanese-American assistant. One looked bored, two were fidgety (wearing obvious disguises); the remaining two frowned with skepticism while tugging on their identical muttonchop whiskers.

Michael wondered what type of lives these men led. Did they beat their wives, or harm their children, or frequent prostitutes—or did they derive enough pleasure just from watching gruesome motion-picture shows?

Of the six pictures on which he had worked with Redmond, this had been by far the most dissatisfying. The first had been a beautiful study of a ballerina's dance; then he had photographed sultry naked women. What might come next after ritual suicide—Redmond killing a baby, perhaps? Michael felt the shame in his involvement, even if Redmond didn't care.

The first had been a beautiful study of a ballerina's dance, then he had photographed sultry naked women. What might come next after ritual suicide—Redmond killing a baby, perhaps?

After this evening's spectacle, Michael had made up his mind to disappear, as he had done so many times before, simply cover his tracks. He had enough skill and connections to find work elsewhere, even with his Japanese heritage. Perhaps he would go to New York City, though the majority of filmmaking had shifted toward the Los Angeles area with its variety of scenery....

As Michael fed the celluloid film into the projector and checked the bulb, Redmond began to explain, inaccurately, the traditions and lore behind hara-kiri. Michael considered leaving the room after he started the projector, just to avoid seeing Takahashi die yet again, but decided against it. He would see this project through to the end, then be away from Redmond for good.

"Gentlemen, please enjoy the first screening of Redmond's *Scarlet Sword*." The director placed his hands together to imitate a Japanese bow, then stepped away from the bloodstained screen. As the projector began to flicker and whir, a sepia image of Akira Takahashi appeared on the screen. Michael focused quickly.

The five men in the audience watched as the grim young man sat cross-legged in his robes, staring at his sword. The film was intensely sharp and remarkably clear, showing too many details.

Takahashi withdrew the katana from its sheath and took the cloth from his father's gnarled hand. The clicking projector made the only noise in the room. The men leaned forward to watch; Michael was reminded of crocodiles lurking on riverbanks, alert for prey.

Takahashi placed the point of the sword against his stomach. He drew a deep breath, ready for the thrust.

Along the top of the screen appeared a deep crimson line, startling in its intensity against the black-and-white world. The red line widened, covering about a quarter of the screen before it began to drip like thick blood down the screen.

The five men muttered in amazement at Redmond's technique, how he'd been able to superimpose such a brilliant color onto the dull sepia tone.

"Mikey!" Redmond said, his voice a confused growl.

On the image, Takahashi stared down at the curved sword, oblivious to the thick red streams oozing across the screen and obliterating everything.

Feeling a growing horror, Michael tapped the projector lens. A shadow of his fingers should have fallen across the stained-blanket screen, but it didn't. Droplets popped out of the movie reel itself, like juice from a pomegranate seed. Michael touched the film feeding into the projector. His fingers came away wet and sticky.

The five men in the audience began to grumble. The crimson blot prevented them from seeing what the samurai was doing. Redmond swallowed several times; his freckled skin looked a sick gray in the red light.

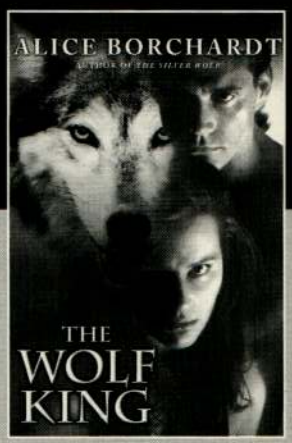
The curtain of blood spilled to the bottom of the screen and covered the entire picture.

A roaring wind numbed Michael's ears, making him giddy. His vision went fuzzy, and then an empty coldness swept over him. The

Continued on page 76

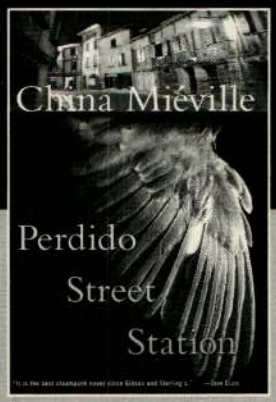
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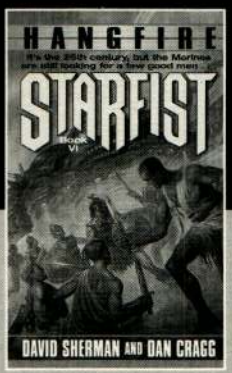
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When destiny calls, what will your answer be?
And can it make a difference?

Messages

The spring to the screen door twangs, and Ben squeals as he jumps down the back steps. Behind him, the door slams shut before TJ pushes through it and his feet thump softly on the grass. Ben races across the yard, in the dark, for the path lined with trees like corridor walls. Light floods the yard from the back of the house and sprawls Ben's shadow out on the grass in front of him.

Ben's mother calls, "You guys are going to break your necks like that, and TJ, you better slow down a bit!"

BY ROB VAGLE
ILLUSTRATION BY LAURIE HARDEN





Ben knows he can beat TJ. Ever since they were five years old he has been beating TJ in almost everything. Six years of winning. Ben thinks about this and pushes on to the end of the path. Dim light glints off the guardrails bordering the stairs that lead down to the boathouse, the dock, and the lake. He pays no attention to the gentle sound of waves slapping the dock. He listens to TJ's laboring breath and wonders if TJ will ever win a race.

Ben slows his pace.

They reach the stairs, side by side, and they descend, taking two steps at a time, each with a guardrail at his side. TJ laughs and this makes Ben laugh. Ben stumbles over his feet, and just to make it look good, he tips forward a little more and grips the railing with both hands. TJ runs on down while holding the baseball cap to his head.

"Go, Teege," Ben says softly.

He waits until TJ passes the side of the boathouse and until his feet pound the fiberglass dock like hands beating on the bottom of an empty garbage can. Then Ben hustles down the stairs. His feet pound the dock, and the wind blows in his ears as he runs. He sees TJ at the end of the dock facing the lake, bent over, hands on his knees. Ben moans and slows down, taking smaller and smaller steps as he reaches his friend.

"You beat me again, Teege." Earlier in the day, in the cool lake water, TJ had out-dunked Ben.

TJ points at the water. "A bottle."

It's almost too dark to see, but a bottle bobs with the waving water, catching what little light there is from the stars and Moon. TJ drops to his hands and knees. The bald area at the back of his head and neck is pale in the dark.

"Teege, aren't you glad about winning the race? Maybe you're not sick anymore."

TJ looks up at him, his eyes shadowed from the rest of his face underneath the bill of his cap. He says nothing and lays on his stomach and reaches into the water. Ben feels small or at least invisible. He shoves his hands in the pockets of his windbreaker, sighs, and looks back up at the light shining from the back of the house.

TJ's hands splash in the water. "You let me win."

Ben laughs. "What?"

TJ pulls out a tall 20-ounce bottle from the water. Streaks of white paper remain on the glass, the label gone. A white cap tops the mouth of the bottle. TJ buckles at the waist and knees, bringing his legs over the edge of the dock, and sits up.

Ben sits next to him. "You think I let you win?"

"You shouldn't do that, Ben. I don't care if you win."

Ben looks out across the lake. Lights from cabins on the other side reflect in the water. "I didn't let you win. I mean it, maybe you really are getting better."

TJ turns the bottle around in his hands. "Don't say that. It's not true."

"It's possible, Teege."

"No, Ben." TJ shakes his head. "My parents worry too much now. They try to hide it, but they cry."

Ben looks away. TJ sounded sad. He imagines TJ's sad, pouting lips. Music comes from somewhere across the lake. The summer night is cool with a breeze blowing across skin. Ben remembers what they did earlier in the day: They had swum off this dock where the shallow water stretches for many yards out. Ben walked until the water reached his chin without losing his cool. TJ wasn't as daring. He walked only a few yards from the dock, the water below his bony shoulders. TJ laughed often, but there were times when his face suddenly turned serene, emotionless, and he became distant. He stared at the sky and remained quiet for a time. TJ's parents held him in their arms whenever he had that look.

The same look, Ben knows, TJ has now in the dark.

"Ever wonder what happens when we die, Ben?" TJ asks.

"Why do you have to talk like that?"

TJ twists the cap off the bottle and his elbow touches Ben's arm. There is a noise much like the sound of someone blowing across a pop-bottle rim. Warm air brushes Ben's cheek.

"Did you hear that?" TJ asks.

Ben wipes his cheek with the back of his hand. "Hear what? What's so special about blowing at a pop-bottle rim?"

"There was a voice in the bottle," TJ says. "Someone sent a message."

Ben laughs. TJ holds the bottle close to his face, turns it upside down, shakes it, and periodically glances up at the night that stretches across the lake.

Ben grips the edge of the dock and stops his legs from swinging. "Teege, what are you talking about?" TJ lifts the rim of the bottle to his lips.

Ben squints. "Teege?"

"Hello," he says, "my name's TJ."

"Teege?"

TJ replaces the cap and gives it a twist. He relaxes his arms and then tightens it some more. He pulls his right arm back and throws the bottle. In a moment, it splashes down in the water.

"TJ?" Ben's mother calls from the house. "TJ, your mother and father are here!"

TJ stands up. "See you later, alligator."

Ben grins to himself. Now, this is more like the old TJ. He stands up to face TJ. "After a while, crocodile," he replies.

TJ looks for a long time at the lake over Ben's shoulder. Ben also glances there. "Why were you so weird about that bottle?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know?"

TJ shrugs his shoulders. "I'll see you tomorrow, Ben."

TJ leaves and Ben stands alone out on the dock.

Above the lake and the dock a night sky is sprinkled with stars. Ben contemplates what his friend has said. TJ pointed out that the stars, the only light, fade away at the horizon. Then there is darkness. The ripples in the lake come from there. Sometimes things float on the water and reach the dock. These things are messages about what hides behind and beyond the stars, the horizon, and the darkness.

"What do you think?" TJ asks. He spits some sunflower shells at the lake. He pauses a moment, his jaw working, and spits out some more. "We don't know what's out there."

Ben plucks a few seeds from the bag in between them. Inside his mouth he cracks the shell on one side and chews the nut on the other. His legs dangle over the roof of the boathouse that also doubles as a patio deck that his parents never seem to use. He bounces the heels of his shoes against the wooden boathouse door and hugs the lower bar of the guardrail, hands on the scaly rust of the metal. The dock below is a dim streak of white. His mouth is already dry with salt. He smiles at his friend.

"We know what's out there in the daytime."

"No," TJ replies, "you know what I mean."

TJ grabs the upper bar of the railing with both hands and his chest presses against the lower bar. He squints as he tries to look through the night. Some of the moonlight is caught in his eyes. The wind that blows across the water, making it ripple, blows at his friend's face and nudges the bill of his cap.

"That's where the bottle came from," TJ says.

Ben shakes his head. "There wasn't anything special about that bottle."

TJ pushes himself away from the railing and stands up. He runs across the deck and down the steps. Ben stuffs the bag of seeds into his jacket pocket and scrambles up to follow. TJ is already at the end of the dock by the time Ben reaches the bottom of the stairs. Ben runs to the end and finds TJ on his stomach with his hands in the water.

"What did you find now?" he asks.

TJ pushes himself up from the dock and sits there. He holds a bottle in his hands. The white cap is sharply visible against the backdrop of water and Ben sees the same white streaks of paper on the glass just like the night before.

Ben sits next to him. "That can't be the same bottle!"

TJ brushes a wet arm against Ben as he twists the cap off. Ben hears the wind blow intermittently across the pop-bottle mouth, creating syllables and bellows, almost like words, but to Ben nothing is clear.

"He talked to me again, Ben." TJ stands up and steps back.

Ben twists around and TJ stands there with the bottle cradled in his hands. No light brings out the features of face, but Ben knows TJ is excited, smiling. He stands up and goes to TJ's side.

"Teege!" Ben says irritably. "It was the wind!"

TJ grips the bottle hard, shaking it. He tilts his head slightly, just as a dog would do. He says, "The wind doesn't blow like that. It doesn't say things."

Ben scratches his head, feeling confused like when he tries to figure out some of those word jumbles in the newspaper. "What did you think it said?"

TJ steps past Ben and goes to the end of the dock and says, "The voice wants to help me when I go."

"Will you stop talking like that." Ben wants TJ to turn around. He wants him to stop staring out there.

TJ lifts the bottle to his lips. "Where will I go when I die?"

"Teege!" Ben walks up behind TJ and is surprised when an elbow pokes him in the chest. He grunts and for a moment the bottle is in front of his face. He grabs for it with both hands and grasps nothing as TJ throws it. The dark swallows the bottle.

"TJ!" His friend's mother calls from the house. "We're ready to go!"

TJ turns, steps around Ben, and lifts a hand to his mouth. "Coming!"

Ben starts, "Teege—"

"I'll see if I can stay overnight tomorrow, Ben." TJ waves. "See you later, alligator."

Ben only waves back.

He stands there and stares at his friend climbing the stairs that are pale like bone in the moonlight, stares after him until TJ is lost in the shadows. TJ is fine right now, Ben thinks. He faces the lake again and closes his eyes. He searches the dark that is inside there. TJ can't go there. There is nothing. Nothing. Ben thinks about these things and about the bottle with messages for TJ. A voice calling for his friend. A bottle from the dark that keeps coming back. He shivers, shakes his shoulders, and has to open his eyes. He turns quickly and the pounding of his feet on the dock is a welcomed echoing sound as he runs back to the house yearning for light.

The next night, Ben stands next to TJ at the end of the dock. Clouds in the sky cover the stars. Waves slop against the legs of the dock.

"What do you think he looks like, Ben?"

Ben looks at TJ. "Who?"

TJ stares at the lake. "The man or angel that says things in the bottle." He laughs. "I wonder if it's God."

Ben makes an impatient sigh; he knows better. "Let's do something else, Teege. This is boring."

TJ doesn't move. He stands with his hands tucked in his pockets. Something clinks against one of the metal legs of the dock. TJ drops to his knees immediately. Ben moves after him, and TJ lays on his stomach, hands reaching into the water. Ben lays on his stomach and thrusts his hands at the water, running over TJ's hands, searching for the bottle.

TJ suddenly pushes himself up to his knees, bottle in hand, and stands up.

"Yes!" He says.

Ben stands up in front of TJ, blocking his view of the lake. "Give me that thing."

Ben pulls the bottle from TJ's hands and steps away. The glass is cold and slick.

TJ touches Ben's shoulder. "Open it."

Ben turns his head and TJ is right there, warm breath blowing in Ben's face. "Why?"

"I wanna hear the message."

Ben shrugs his shoulders. "I don't."

"Let me open it then."

"No." Ben hides the bottle behind his back and steps away.

Ben laughs. It sounds fake and the laughter doesn't fill the inside of him like the laughter when he plays. TJ holds his hand out.

Ben clenches his jaw shut. "No."

TJ whines. He rushes forward. Ben pulls his arm back to throw and uses his other hand to push at his friend. TJ's weight is nothing, shoulder and chest thin and fragile like a bag of sticks. TJ jumps and reaches for the bottle behind Ben's shoulder. He grunts each time he leaps, making tremors ripple through the dock when he comes back down.

"Ever wonder what happens when we die, Ben?"

"Ben!"

Ben feints a throw. TJ squeals and jumps higher, arms waving in the air.

"I'll smash it!" Ben points to the boathouse.

"Stop it, Ben! Why are you doing this?"

Ben drops his arm and hides the bottle behind his back. TJ stops jumping and now his breathing sounds heavy.

"There's no voice in here," Ben says.

TJ scuffs his shoe across the dry surface of the dock, making a squeaking sound. "There is too."

Ben tsks and cocks his arm again. "It was just the wind, dummy."

TJ steps back as if ready to catch it. "Please, Ben!"

Ben hears the whine in TJ's voice and thinks of the baldness underneath his friend's cap. He fakes a throw again but this time TJ doesn't move.

"Don't throw it," TJ says.

Ben pauses.

The wind runs through the hair at the back of his head and presses against his windbreaker. That same wind flips TJ's cap off his head. It is a toppling shadow as it hits the dock. TJ doesn't move. The top of his head is a smooth dome like the top half of the moon.

Ben brings the bottle out from behind his back.

"Be a baby about it then," he says and grabs TJ's right hand. TJ's hand is warm as he wraps his fingers around the bottle. Ben lets go

Continued on page 78



When we choose with our hearts, sometimes our choices are flawed. When we choose with our heads, they almost always are.

Otherling

By Juliet Marillier

Illustration by Paul Lee

It was a harsh winter, a season of slicing winds and ice-fettered waterways, of hunger and endurance. The days were always short in the shadow season, but this year dark seemed hungry to devour light. Bellies yearned for fresh meat; hearts ached for the Sun's blessing. The Songs told of the coming of seals, and sanctioned the killing of three: sufficient for a good feast for every man, woman, and child of the Folk. Bard's Singing set out how the hunting must be done. The men went masked, their leader garbed in the hunt cloak, soft and gray, shining and supple as if he were himself a seal. The spearing was prefaced by apologies and words of gratitude. Afterward there was feasting, and oil for lamps, and the Folk took new heart. Now they might endure until the days began to lengthen again, and the first cautious leaf-swellings appeared on the wind-battered trees.

But Bard felt the rasping in his chest, his cough like a stick drawn over wattles, and he knew he had seen his last spring. He watched his student. She had been apt to learn: She could draw forth the pipe's piercing keen, and conjure the subtle rhythms of the bones. By candlelight she summoned the voice of the small harp strung with the gut of winter hares. Its melody hung bittersweet in air: call and echo, substance and shadow. The girl had endured the days of fasting, the sleepless nights, the necessary trials by water and fire and deep earth. She had heard the Songs; had held within her the voices of the ancestors, a burden precious as an unborn child. All this she had learned. But she was young; perhaps too young.

"Tonight's lesson is grave indeed." Bard spoke quietly as the harp song ended. "You know already that Bard is born only from a twinning; that in the way of things there will be one such birth among the Folk in each generation. This allows time for one Bard to pass on the mysteries to the next, as I have done to you. If the cycle were broken, and Bard died before his student was ready, the Singing would be lost, and without it the Folk would perish. The Songs reveal the great pattern that must be followed. They are our true map and pathway; our balance and our lodestar."

The girl nodded, saying nothing.

"Our calling cannot be denied. It is a sacred trust. But. …" He faltered. How could her mind encompass the desolation of a life spent without human touch? She was but half grown: barely a woman. "There is a darker side. The Songs must be taken unsullied from their source, and passed on pure and strong to the Folk. Bard must devote every scrap of will, every fiber of spirit, every last corner of mind to that. It will be long; you will bear the burden until your student is ready to take your place. There is no room for other things. So we remain alone; apart. But it is not enough. Bard must be stronger

than an ordinary man or woman; strong enough to endure the power of the Singing and not splinter into madness; true enough to form unbreakable link and pure conduit from spirit to man." His sigh scraped like a blade on ice. "That is why Bard must be twin-born. That is why we have the Choosing."

"What is the Choosing?" The girl's small features were frost-white in the dimness of the stone hut, and her eyes had darkened to shadows. Outside, the wind roared across the thatch; the rope-hung weights knocked against the walls.

"If you had lived amongst the Folk, you would know a little of this already," the old man said wearily. "I have kept it from you; it is a mystery darker than any you have yet learned. Now you must know it, and begin to harden your will toward it. You may be lucky; for you the Choosing may come late, when you are practiced in the disciplines of the mind. Have you asked yourself what becomes of the twin who is not Bard? How this choice is made?"

She pondered a moment. "I suppose one seems more apt. Perhaps the other is sent away; I have seen no likeness of myself amongst the Folk."

"Indeed not. Your brother died long ago, when you were no more than babes; and mine met the same fate in a time before my memory. We hold their strength as well as our own, and are ourselves doubly strong: two in one. Without this, no man or woman has the endurance, the fortitude, the clear head and unsullied spirit a Bard must possess. You could not hear the Songs, you could not draw the voice of power from the harp, or sway the minds of the Folk, without your Otherling."

"My Otherling?" she breathed.

"Your twin; the one who was sacrificed so that you could become Bard."

Her eyes were mirrors of darkness. "They killed him?" she whispered.

The old man nodded, his features calm. He was still Bard; if he felt compassion, he did not let it show. "Soon after birth. It is always thus. A choice is made. The stronger, the more suitable, is preserved. The Otherling dies before he sees a second dawn, and his spirit flows into the brother or sister. That way, Bard becomes strong enough for the calling. It is necessary, child."

"Bard?" Her voice was very faint in the half-dark, and not quite steady. "Who makes the choice? Who performs the—the sacrifice?"

The old man looked at the girl, and she looked back at him. He needed no words to answer her; she read the truth in his eyes.

was as well he told her when he did. Next morning when she arose, shivering, to make up the fire and heat some gruel for the old man's breakfast, she found him calm-faced and cold in his bed. She laid white shells on his eyelids, and touched his shaven head with her fingertips. When a boy passed by, trudging to the outer field with a bucket of oats, she called her message from behind closed shutters. Before nightfall the elders came with a board and took the old man away. Now she was Bard. Later, she stood dry-eyed by the pyre as he burned hot and pungent in the freezing air of the solstice.

At her first Singing she told the old man's life and his passing, and she told a good season to come, for all the harsh winter. Seed could be planted early; mackerel would be plentiful. The sea would take no men this spring, as long as they were careful. When she was done the people made their reverences and departed. Some lived close by in the settlement of Storna, but others had far to travel, across the island to Grimskail, Settersby, or distant Frostrim. They boarded their sledges and whipped on wiry dog or sturdy pony; they strapped bone skates to their feet and made their way by frozen stream and lake path. They would return for the great Singings Bard must give at each season's turning. At these times new Songs would be given; new wisdom from ancient voices. The Singings had names: Waking, Ripening, Reaping, Sleeping. But she had her own names for them, which she did not tell. Longing, Knowing, Sacrifice, Silence.

They said she was a good Bard in those days. She kept aloof, as she should. She'd greet them when she must, and withdraw inside her hut like a ghost-woman. Days and nights she waited at the stones, silent in their long shadows, listening. They said that if you dared to speak to her at such a time she would not hear you, though her eyes were open. All that she could hear was the silence of the Song.

One long winter a man brought a load of wood and stayed to chop it for her. She watched him from behind the shutters, marvelling at the strength and speed of it. When he was done, he did not simply go away as he should, but used his fist to play a firm little dance-beat on her door. She opened it the merest crack, looked out with her shadowy eyes, her face pale with knowledge.

"All finished," said the young man, his grin dimpled and generous, his hair standing on end, fair as ripe barley. "Stacked in the corner to keep dry for you. Cold up here."

"Thank you," she whispered, looking into his eyes; merry, kind eyes the color of rockpools under a summer sky. "Thank you." The door began slowly to creak shut.

"Lonely life," said the young man.

Bard nodded, and looked again, and closed the door.

After that he would come up from time to time, not often, but perhaps more often than the natural pattern of things would allow. He would mend leaking thatch or unblock a drain; she would watch him from behind the door, or through the chinks of the shutter, and thank him. There was never more than a word or two in it, but after a while she found she was looking for him in the crowd whenever she ventured into Storna. She found she was peering from her window when folk passed on the road, in case she might see him go by, and turn his head toward her shutters, and smile just for her. She learned his name: Ekka, a warrior's name, though a man with such a smile was surely no fighter, for all his strong arms that hewed the iron-hard logs as if cleaving through rounds of fresh cheese.

She found her attention wandering, and brought it sharply back. Under the stones, seated cross-legged in silent pose of readiness, she waited for the Songs, and they did not come. Instead of their powerful voices, their ancient, binding truths, all she could hear was a faint fragment of melody, a little tinkling thing like the tunes played by the band of traveling Folk who went about the island in summer, entertaining the crowds with tricks and dancing. It was the first time the Songs had ever eluded her, and when she came down to her hut, empty of the wisdom whose telling was her life's only purpose, she knew the old man's teaching had been sound. She must shut down those parts of herself that belonged to the spring season: the Longing. Bard must move forward quite alone.

From that time on her door was closed to him. Once or twice he called through fastened shutters, knowing she was there, and she set her jaw and held her silence. She went out hooded, and kept her eyes on the ground. He could not be totally avoided, for he was a leader in the settlement, with a part to play in the gatherings. Bard taught herself to greet him and feel nothing. She taught herself to look at him as she looked at all the others: as if the space between them were as wide and as unbridgeable as the great bowl of the star-studded sky. She watched him withdraw, the blue eyes darkened, the smile quite gone. Later, she watched him fall in love, and marry; and she kept her thoughts in perfect order. Sleep was another matter. Even Bard's training cannot teach the mastery of dreams.

Time passed. Ekka's young wife had a tiny daughter. There were bountiful seasons and harsh ones. In times of trouble, the Songs cannot of themselves make things good. They cannot calm stormy seas, or cure sheep of the murrain, or bring sunshine in place of endless, drenching rain. But they do bring wisdom. A warning of bad times ahead enables preparation: the mending of thatch, the strengthening of walls, the shepherding of stock into barns, and the conservation of supplies. Such a warning makes it possible to get through the hard times. The Folk kept a careful balance, each decision governed by the pattern she gave them: an ancient pattern in which wind and tide, fire and earth, man and beast were all part of the one great dance. One year the Ripening Song told of raiders in high ships, vessels with names like *Dragonflight* and *Sea Queen* and *Whalesway*. The Folk moved north to Frostrim, driving their stock before them.

The raiders came and passed the island by; a shed or two was burned, a boat taken. At Reaping the Folk returned, and Bard sang their safety and a mild winter. Another year the Songs told death. That season an ague took Storna, and 12 good Folk perished: man, woman, and babe. Ekka's wife was gravely ill, and Bard performed a Telling by the bedside. In a Telling one did not exactly ask the ancestors a favor: one simply set out a possible course of events, then hoped. Bard told how Sifri would bear more children, fine, bonny girls like her little daughter there; strong sons, blue-eyed and merry. She told the laughter of these children through the narrow ways of Storna and out across the fields, as they chased one another under the sun of an endless summer day. She finished, and pulled the hood up over her shaven head, and left. The next morning Sifri was sitting up and drinking barley broth. By springtime her belly was swollen with child again, her small, sweet features flushed and mysterious with inner life.

At Reaping that year, Bard stood beneath the watchstone and heard the Song, and felt her heart grow cold, for all the discipline she laid on herself. One did not ask the ancestors, *Are you sure?* Before the first frost Sifri gave birth to twins, a pair of boys each the image of the other. They were named, though neither would keep his name for long: Halli and Gelli. It was time for the Choosing.

She came down the hill, each step a thudding heartbeat. The Folk watched silent and solemn-eyed as if she herself were the sacrifice. Outside the Choosing place the elders waited. Sifri and Ekka stood hand in hand, faces ash-white with grief and pride. They would lose both sons today, though one they might keep for a little while. The small girl stood at Sifri's skirts, thumb in mouth. Bard nodded gravely, acknowledging their courage; and then she went in.

The noise was deafening. Her own hut was always quiet. No hearthside cat or watchful dog disturbed her days, no servant muttered greetings, no child yelled fit to split her head apart as these two did. But wait. Only one babe screamed thus, one lusty child turned his face red with wailing and beat his tiny fists helplessly in air, seeking the comfort of touch, the return to warmth and love. This babe struggled; the other was quiet, so quiet one might have thought him already dead. She moved closer. The crying set her teeth on edge; it made her own eyes water. The children were in rush baskets, the lids set each to the side. Between them a stool had been set, and on it lay a dagger, its hilt an ornate masterpiece of gilded wire and small red gems, its blade sturdy, sharp, purpose-made. The children were naked, washed clean of the residue of birth. Perhaps they were cold. Perhaps that was why one screamed so. Soon one would be warm again, and the other colder still. It would only take a moment. Grasp, thrust, turn the eyes away. It would be over quickly, so quickly. There was no doubt which must be chosen: the stronger, the more fit. The fighter.

She moved forward again. The screams went on. This lad would have a powerful voice for the Singing. As for the other … she looked down. There in the woven basket, still as some small woodland creature discovered by a sudden predator, he lay gazing up at her. His round eyes were the color of rockpools under a summer sky. His hair was a fuzz of pure gold. He smiled, and a dimple showed in his infant cheek. He was the image of his father. She turned to the other, her heart lurching, her hands shaking so violently she could surely scarce lift the knife, let alone use it. As if in recognition of the moment, the first twin fell suddenly quiet, though his small chest still heaved from the effort of his outcry. His face was blotched with crying. His hands clutched the air, eager for life.

Now that the sobbing was hushed, sounds filtered in from outside: the creak of cartwheels, children's voices, the lilt of a whistle. Her mind showed her the traveling Folk passing by, motley in their ragged cavalcade, their faces painted in bizarre patterns of red and black and white, their hair knotted and plaited, feathered and ribboned. Even their children looked like a flock of exotic birds. The whistle played a small arch of melody, and ceased abruptly. Someone had told them this was no time for music. And her decision was made. With steady hand, now, Bard reached down and grasped the knife.

There was a form of ritual to be observed: a pattern for the right doing of things. She came out of the small hut, basket in arms. The rush lid now covered the still form that lay within. Atop this lay the knife, its iron blade gaudy with fresh blood. The mother, the father, they did not ask to look or touch. This was not the way of it. The Otherling was gone to shadow; become a part of the great Song which would one day sound from his brother's lips.

"Go to your child," Bard told them softly. "Comfort him well. In three years bring him to me, and I will teach him."

"Thank you," said Ekka, blue eyes deep and solemn.

"Thank you," said Sifri, her voice a very thread of grief, and the two of them went into the hut. Their son's voice called them; now that it was over, he had set to yelling again with double vigor.

Bard bore the little basket up to her own hut, where it lay quiet, encircled by candles, until dusk fell. Her hand was bleeding. She tore a strip of linen from an old shift and bound it around palm and fingers, using her teeth to pull the knot tight. Later, the elders came for the basket and put it on the pyre, and they burned the Otherling with due ceremony. It did not take long, for he was quite small.

They were named, though neither would keep his name for long. It was time for the Choosing.

It seemed she had chosen well. Halli was apt. He grew sturdy and strong, broad shouldered and fair haired like his father, and with a fierce determination to master all he must know. By day she might show a new pattern on the bones; a more challenging mode of harp song. At night she would lie awake to the endless repetitions, the long struggle for perfection. She need not use discipline; her student's own discipline was more rigorous than any she might devise.

For him patience was a far harder lesson, and without patience there can be no listening. At 12 he underwent the trials and showed himself strong enough. That did not surprise her; it was what came after that made her belly tighten with unease, her mind cloud with misgiving.

They stood beneath the watchstone in summer dawn, Bard and student.

"You know what must be done," she said.

There was a shallow depression below the great monolith; a hollow grave-like in its proportions, lined with soft grasses as if to encourage sleep. At summer solstice this place of listening caught the sun, and was a vessel of gold light on the green hill. At midwinter the shadow of the watchstone stretched out across the circle, shrouding the small hollow in profound, mysterious darkness.

Today there were clouds. Halli sat cross-legged, silent. Even so had she waited once herself, and emptied her mind of thought, and willed her breathing slow and slower, while the old Bard stood by the stones as still and patient as if he were himself one of these guardians of ancient truth; as if the lichens, pyre-red, sun-gold, corn-

yellow, might in time grow up across his gray-cloaked form and make a gentle cap for his close-shaven skull. Even so had she waited, and emptied her mind of thought, and willed her breathing slow and slower. Then the Song had come to her, pure and certain, welling in the heart, sounding in the spirit, flooding the receptive mind with truth. It was the voice of the ancestors, ringing forth from the stones themselves, from the deep earth where they stood rooted firm, from the wind and the light and the unfathomable depth of sky. She still held it within her somewhere: that first transcendent moment of joy.

Singing was like the call of a war horn, deep and resonant.

Time passed. It could be long, a day and a night, maybe more. She knew the boy's strength. He would sit there immobile as long as he must, to hear it. And yet, as the sky darkened to rose and violet and pigeon-gray, she wondered. He was apt, anyone could see that. Clever, quick, dedicated. Why was it so long? Inside her, memory stirred and shivered.

At dawn she spoke softly, breaking into his trance, bidding him cease. Another time, she told him. Next time. Halli was angry: with her, with the ancestors, with himself.

"You must learn patience," Bard said.

He clamored to try again. Tomorrow. Tomorrow. Not yet, she said. If the ancestors would not speak, it was not time. His eyes narrowed with resentment, his mouth twisted with frustration.

"You must learn calm," Bard said.

He played the bones like a dance of death. He sounded the pipe in a piercing wail of need. His fingers dragged notes of aching emptiness from the small harp. She made him wait.

The season passed. At Reaping the traveling Folk came through Storna with juggling and dances, with colored streamers and performing dogs. A whistle tune floated up the hill, clean and innocent on the easterly breeze; a tune wrought untutored and free, yet exquisite in its form and feeling. The melody made its way in at her window and tugged at Bard's memory. Behind a closed door Halli played his own pipe, his music intricate, tangled on itself. She heard the two tunes meet and mingle, and she put her hands over her ears and used a technique long practiced to shut out unwelcome thoughts. When she emerged from her trance, all was quiet. At last her student slept, his sturdy form relaxed as a child's, his strong features wan with exhaustion. The pipe had slipped from his fingers to the earthen floor. She laid the blanket over him.

Three Ripenings passed before he began to hear the Songs, and before she let him tell one, he was already a man. Halli chafed against her restrictions. Why did she hold him back thus? He could do it, he knew he could. Didn't she trust him?

"You must learn humility," Bard said. "We are vessels, no more." His anger troubled her. Dreams came, and left her weary.

In his 18th summer Halli gave the Folk his first Singing. Bard listened as he told of early frost and the coming of whales; of a far shore where green fields and bountiful vines might be discovered; of the building of boats. His Singing was like the call of a war horn, deep and resonant. By the end of it, the young men's eyes were alight with excitement: Here was a challenge beyond any yet imagined. Did not the ancestors bid them set forth on a great adventure? In the crowd Sifri stood quiet, her three fair daughters by her. There had been no more sons.

Before the turning of the season they made a fine ship of wattles and skins, tarred for seaworthiness, with oars of larch wood. On the prow they set the great skull of a whale. They called the vessel *Seaskimmer*, and in her the young men of the island journeyed forth one sparkling dawn in search of the fruitful land to the west, a land where one day all might live and prosper under a smiling sun. They did not return at Reaping. The women, the old people, the children cut the barley and stacked the straw. They did not return as the year moved on and the days began to shorten. It was in the shadow time that they came back to the island, those bold venturers of the Folk. A boy and his dog wandered the cold beach of Grimskail, gathering driftwood. Shrouded in weed, cloaked in ribbons of sea wrack, the young men of Storna and Settersby, Grimskail and far Frostrim lay quiet under the winter sky. For seven long days the Folk stood there by the water as the ocean delivered up their sons, each at his own time, each riding his own last wave. Then there was a burning such as the island had not seen in many a long year. The people looked at Bard with doubt in their eyes.

"This was wrong," she told him afterward.

Halli lifted his fair brows. "How can the Singing be wrong? I told only the Song the ancestors gave me."

"It was wrong. The Songs help us avoid such acts of foolish waste; such harvests of anguish. It could not be meant thus."

"Why not?" her student said. "Who can say what the ancestors intend?"

"Surely not the wiping out of a full generation of young men. Who will father sons here? Who will fish and hunt? How will the Folk survive this?"

He smiled; his father's sunny, dimpled smile. "Perhaps the ancestors see a short future for us. Perhaps raiders will come and beget children. Who knows? I cannot answer your questions. You said yourself, we are no more than vessels."

That winter grandmothers and grandfathers swept floors and tended infants and stirred pots of thin gruel, while women cleared snow from thatch and broke ice from fishing holes. The few men of middle years slaughtered stock and hauled up the boats. It was a harsh season, but wisdom was remembered from times past, and they survived. Hard labor keeps tears at bay; exhaustion smothers dreams. At Waking, when the air held a deceptive whisper of new season's warmth, she would not let him listen for the Song.

"I am Bard," she told him, "and I will do it. You are not yet ready. You must learn something more."

"What?" Halli demanded fiercely. "What?"

But Bard gave no answer, for she had none.

The Song was an anthem to the lost ones, and a warning. The Folk must keep the balance or perish. Their children had survived the savage winter. Now all must be watchful. Bard thought the ancestors' message was not without hope. But she was tired, so tired that she stumbled as she went to stand before the Folk in the ritual place; so weak that she could scarce summon the breath for the Singing. Afterward her mind felt drained, her thoughts scattered. She could hardly remember what she had told them.

The weariness continued. Maybe she was sick. Maybe she should get a potion from the traveling Folk, ever renowned for their elixirs. There was wisdom among that colorful, elusive band of wanderers: they had sent no sons voyaging across the ocean to return in a tumble of bleached and broken bone. But she was too tired to seek them out ...

Halli was solicitous. He brought her warm tea. He ensured the fire was made up and the floor swept clean. It was he who performed the Singing at midsummer, telling of fine shoals of fish south of Storna Bay, and favorable winds. Before the season's end deer might be taken and the meat smoked for winter.

The few men left on the island were not overkeen to put to sea, but the Singing removed any choice. They came to her afterward with their questions. How many deer? How many days may we fish in safety? With our young men gone, who will lead the hunt? She could not answer them. She had not heard this Song, for the stones were far, a weary distance up the hill. It was Halli who answered.

"Since the Singing did not tell of this, take what you will," he said.

There were some men of middle years, too old to sail for new horizons, still young enough for work. They found mackerel in great numbers and, thinking of winter, brought in netful after shining netful. The salting huts were crammed to bursting, and still there were more, a bountiful harvest. They went for deer, and found them in wooded valleys beyond Settersby. They were gone seven days; they returned bearing two great antlered carcasses and the body of a fine, fair-haired man. Ekka was dead, slipped from a cliff edge as he readied his spear to take the stag cleanly. Bard could hear the sound of Sifri's grieving all the way up the hill and in through the shutters. She looked into her student's clear blue eyes, reading the iron there, and something shivered deep inside her. This was her doing. This was her Choosing. The boy had killed his own father. A Telling came to her mind as she lay shivering under her thick blankets, a Telling of times to come: of a spring with no mackerel, a spring when the young of puffin and albatross starved on the cliffs for lack of nourishment. In the season after, their numbers were less, and less again next Waking. Then weasel and fox, wolf and bear grew bolder, until neither chicken nor goose, young lamb nor younger babe in cradle was safe. The men grew old and feeble, the women gaunt and weary. Children were few. The Telling turned Bard's bones to ice. In such a time, all it would take was one hard winter to finish the Folk.

"You look tired," Halli observed. "You must rest. Leave everything to me." And indeed, there seemed a great urge in her to sleep; to melt into darkness, and let it all slip away. After all, what could she do? She had made her choice long years ago. All stemmed from that, and there was no changing it.

On the edge of slumber she heard again the sweet voice of a whistle, played somewhere out in the night; as deep and subtle, for all its simplicity, as the voices of the ancestors themselves. Bard slid out of bed, careful to make no sound. From Halli's chamber the small harp rang out. Still he drilled his fingers, the patterns ever more complex, as if he would never be satisfied. The sound of it frightened her. He frightened her. Unchecked, he would be the end of them all. But she felt so weak. The Folk no longer trusted her. Ekka was dead. She was alone, all alone …

A long time she knelt there on the earthen floor, shivering in her worn nightrobe. The old learning seemed almost forgotten: how to empty the mind and slow the breath, how to calm the body and control the will; how to listen. Somehow it had almost slipped away from her. She had forgotten she was Bard.

Of course you are alone, she thought fiercely. *Bard is always alone. Have you let even that most basic lesson escape you?*

"Not quite. But you have misremembered."

Her head jerked upward. For a moment she thought—but no, the harp still sounded from the far chamber, servant of his will. The figure which stood before her was another entirely, and yet as familiar as the image she saw when she bent over the water trough to cup hands and drink. This wraith with hollow eyes and pallid cheeks, with shaven head, with ragged cloak and long hands apt for the making of music, this phantom was … herself. And yet … and yet …

"You know me," said her visitor, moving closer. She reached out a hand to touch, scarce believing what she saw, and her fingers moved through him, cloak, flesh, bone, all insubstantial as shadow.

"You are my brother," she whispered, her eyes sliding fearful toward the inner door.

"He will not hear us."

"Why have you come? Why journey from—from death to seek me out?"

"You are afraid. You see no answers. Yet you hold the key to this yourself, Bard." His voice was grave and quiet. "The pattern is gone awry; that is your doing. It is for you to weave it straight and even once more."

"Why didn't you come before?" she asked him urgently. "I needed help. Why not come before good folk died, before he did what he did? Where were you?"

"You have carried me within you all this time, sister. If not for your error, you could have heard my voice, stronger as the years passed. Bard is never truly alone; always she has her Otherling. But you disobeyed the ancestors. Your choice was flawed. Now its influence spreads dark over you."

Bard stared at him, aware once more of her leaden limbs, her burdened heart. "The Folk will perish. Maybe not this year, maybe not next; but in time, all will be lost. I've seen it."

The Otherling gazed back. His eyes seemed empty sockets, yet filled with light. He was both old and young: an infant in a rush basket, a strong man in his prime, an ancient wise in spirit. "You made it so," he said quietly. "Now unmake it. Do what you could not do, long years ago. One does not lightly disregard the wisdom of the ancestors. Since the day you did so the Folk have walked under a shadow, a darkness that will in time engulf them. You hold their very future at the point of your knife."

"But—"

"The Otherling must die, Bard. There is no avoiding it. He cannot live in the light; he cannot be left to walk the land and whisper his stories in the ear of farmer and fisherwoman, merchant and seamstress. And Bard cannot do her work without him. The two must be one, for they are reality and reflection, light and dark, substance and shadow."

Bard shivered. "You mean the Otherling is—evil? That if he lives he must inevitably work destruction?"

"Ah, no. It is not so simple. The two are halves of the one whole; complement and completion of each other. Can day exist without night, light without shade, waking without sleeping? Can the Folk survive without the death of the mackerel in the net, the spear in the seal's heart, the hen's surrender of her unborn children? The Otherling must stand behind, in darkness, to make the balance. Only then can Bard sing truth. Now go, do what you must do before it is too late."

"I'm so tired."

"I will help you." He moved to embrace her; his encircling arms were as insubstantial as vapor. She felt a shudder like a cool breath through her, and he was gone.

travelers were camped by the seafront, children gathering shells under a blood-red dawn, the smoke of campfires rising sluggishly. There was a rumble of approaching storm, its deep music a counterpoint to the whistle's plangent voice. The young man sat watching the sky, as if his tune might coax the sun to show itself between the rain-heavy clouds. As Bard approached him the melody faltered and ceased.

She had not known how she would speak to him. How can you say, *Come with me, I will tell you whose brother you are, and then you will die?* Ah, those eyes, those fine, merry eyes she had seen gazing up at her once, open and guileless. He had been so quiet. He had been so good. Never a sound from him, as she had borne him forth, basket closed tight, all the way up the hill to her hut. Never a peep out of him, as she bribed the little girls to take him, the little girls with plaited crests to their hair, and faces all painted in spirals and dots of red and white. What was one more infant among so many? Who would know, when every one of them wore a guise of rainbow colors, a cloak of dazzling anonymity? She had paid handsomely; the women would feed him, and care for him. They were a generous kind, and made their own rules. The rush basket, weighted with the carcass of a fat goose, had burned to nothing. Nobody had known. Nobody but Bard, whose heart shivered every

Continued on page 78

Haiden Times

By Susan J. Kroupa
Illustration by David Robyn Seeley

Johnny Calico first saw Graylady on a mild spring morning, one so full of the damp scent of life that he could almost believe its promise of new beginnings. Spires of smoke rising from south of Provo and northwest of Orem told the truth, however. The fires still burned, a neighborhood here, a city block there, and would continue to do so as long as there were houses to feed the flames.

Johnny crinkled his nose against the trace of smoke and ash in the air. Before he'd left the reservation, he used to love the smell of smoke, pungent with memories of fry bread and mutton stew and shelter from bitter winter winds. Now, it always smelled of death, even smoke from the clean fires that burned in the woods far from the homes.

Still, he preferred the outside air and was glad that it would soon be mild enough to sleep outside. He hated sleeping in the houses, with the stink of blood soaked into the walls, and probably a ghost or two just looking for a 10-year-old Navajo boy to torment. Once, Mom Tyler had told him that Anglo houses didn't have ghosts. She had said it flatly as if she couldn't possibly be wrong, but Johnny wasn't sure—his grandfather believed in ghosts. He wondered if the Tyler home had ghosts or if by now it had burned to the ground, but he didn't know. Since the Death, he had lived in 20 or 30 houses, and had wandered all over Utah Valley, moving every week or so, but he'd never gone near the Tyler's neighborhood again. If the men from the Church were still looking for him, that would be the first place they'd check.

This time, he'd picked north Orem and, in the dark of the night, had ridden his bike with one of his packs hooked over the handlebars and the other on his back. He'd worn the precious rifle, found just two weeks before, slung over his shoulder.

He hated riding in the dark. One big piece of glass and he'd have a flat tire, which would mean endless searching to replace it and might delay his trip just when it was critical to get started. But daylight was too dangerous, so it had been in the dark that he'd traveled north, picking a house at random when he felt he'd gone far enough. It hadn't been hard to get in—it never was; people had been too busy dying to worry about locking doors—and Johnny had spent the night on the couch.

In the morning he'd gone into the backyard to breathe the spring air, and to check out the neighborhood from the protection of the backyard fence. Peeking through the old redwood slats, he saw her. She sat among the weeds in the yard of the house across from him, staring at something behind and above him. Mount Timpanogas, perhaps. She was about 35 or 40, and, despite her baggy

There is no replacement for love—except more love.


SEELEY

sweater, Johnny could see that she was thin.

Suddenly her shoulders began shaking and she raised a sleeve to wipe her eyes. He named her then. Graylady. Not because of her fair skin, paler even than Mom Tyler's, or because of her dark hair that fell raggedly around her shoulders, but because, as he watched her alone in the weeds, it seemed that her heart was as gray as the ash from the ever-present fires, her soul as burned and fragile.

The horse came almost a week later. Normally, Johnny would have moved on by then, but he'd been agonizing whether it was late enough in the spring to begin the trip. If he waited too long, the desert would be impossible. A two-day rainstorm decided the issue. Rain in the valleys meant snow on Soldier Summit, which was the only way he could get across the mountains. So he waited out the rain, opening the side and back windows at night to let in the cool, wet air.

The morning after the rain, the sound of hoofs on pavement jolted him awake. He leapt out of bed and ran to the window, heart pounding, worried that one of the bishop's riders had finally caught up with him.

A horse, with no trace of saddle, bridle, or rider, trotted down the road, veered into Graylady's yard and then abruptly stopped, as if it had come home. After a few furtive looks in different directions, it began grabbing mouthfuls of grass. The horse was a bay, a dark red with a black mane and tail. Well-bred, Arabian or Thoroughbred maybe.

Johnny couldn't believe his eyes. It was the first riderless horse that he'd seen in the seven months since the Death, and he wondered if it had run wild all this time or, if not, who could have been careless enough to let it out.

He wondered, too, why it had stopped so suddenly in Graylady's yard. Only a few nights before, on a cold, starry night, he'd prayed with all heart to whatever ancestors might be listening that he'd find his way back to his grandfather.

And now a horse was practically given to him. A horse would be much better than the bike. With a pair of wire cutters, he could ride cross-country and not have to worry about being seen on the roads. He was sure he could find some wire-cutters, and he remembered a house in Provo that had several saddles and bridles in the garage. He watched the horse, barely able to contain his excitement. This was what he needed, what he'd been searching for, the miracle that would see him back to the reservation and his grandfather.

When the horse came, Rachel had been huddled in a chair by the living room, staring at Mount Timpanogas, hearing in the silence of the street her children's voices from another spring only a year—only a lifetime—before.

"It's a hairy frost," Bessie had said.

"Hoary frost," Jared had corrected. It was important to his 10-year old sensibilities that his little sister get it right.

"It *looks* hairy." Bessie shook the mass of red curls she'd inherited from her father and pushed her lips into a pout.

"Jared's right, though. It's hoary—white with age," said Aaron with a laugh in his voice. "It'll be gone by noon." Almost 10 years older than the six-year-old Bessie, Aaron had the distance to be patient. With his dark hair and gray eyes, he took after Rachel as much as Bessie and Jared did after their father, David.

"A fly-by-day frost," Jared had said, laughing at his own joke.

Rachel blinked hard, trying to banish the memory, trying to concentrate instead on the brilliantly snow-covered Mount Timpanogas that her window framed for her. David had loved this view. She blinked again.

And then the horse came, trotted onto her lawn, interrupting both her thoughts and the view.

Without thinking, Rachel threw off the blanket and stuffed her feet into her tennis shoes, then opened the front door slowly and slipped outside.

The horse jerked its head up and snorted, but after eyeing her for a moment, it went back to eating. Rachel wondered why the horse had picked her lawn—in every direction, she was surrounded by empty houses whose wild yards waved neglect. It was always a shock to look down the street; her eyes still expected trim lawns, carefully pruned fruit trees, April daffodils, and rows of red tulips, and they had to shake off that memory in order to see the jungle of it all grown together and shot through with weeds. How long would her eyes do this—trick her with the memory—or her ears listen for the sounds of traffic on the street? Her dreams and her memories conspired against her, refusing to let her rest, and her eyes and ears still lived in the past.

Walking so slowly that her legs ached with impatience, Rachel approached the horse until she was less than an arm's length away. Up close, she could see the sweat matting its dark red coat, the knots and tangles in the black mane and tail.

"Easy," she said in a low voice.

The horse's head came up so fast that Rachel almost jumped in response.

"Easy." She held out a hand.

The horse snorted again and shook its head, but didn't back away.

Rachel let her hand rest on the horse's neck for a moment, then stroked it lightly. The horse had gentle brown eyes that seemed somehow familiar, though Rachel couldn't imagine why.

To her amazement, the horse turned and stepped toward her and began rubbing its face up and down against the front of her, rubbing so hard that Rachel had to dig in her heels to keep from getting knocked over. It finished by resting its head just below her chin.

"Stop it, Liza," she said, half-laughing. She scratched behind its ears, taking only a moment to wonder at the name that seemed to have come out of nowhere. But, after a hasty check under the horse's belly, she found it fit well enough.

"No one to take care of you?" She ran her hands down the long neck, drinking in the sweet horsey smell she remembered from her childhood. The mare raised her head and nuzzled Rachel's face with her nose, her flower-petal nose, and the softness of its touch moved something in the dead place of Rachel's heart so that she knew suddenly that now the horse *did* have a caretaker. She had come out to catch a horse, but the horse had caught her.

She stroked Liza and talked to her in a low voice, but after a few moments began to worry about being seen. To take care of the horse meant to get her into the backyard, out of sight in case the bishop or one of the quorum rode by. One of the first things the Church had done after the Death was to confiscate all means of transportation, horses included. Rachel's backyard had a privacy fence that would hide the horse from passersby, and from the neighbors—Sister Anderson, five houses to the south, and old Brother Connolly, a block and a half to the east. If she could just get the horse into the backyard.

She gave Liza a final pat, and then went inside to look for a rope. She wandered through the house as if she might find one in the mattress and pile of blankets on the floor that served as her bed, or in the kitchen cupboard among the stacks of plates and cups that never got used, or in the living room with the one chair facing the window. The rest of the rooms were empty except for the dining room table and two chairs, her other furniture burned for heat when the power went out during the early days of the Death.

She needed a rope and knew of only one place she might find one.

A glance out the front-room window assured her that the horse was still there, grazing. She didn't have much time. If Sister Anderson came out, she would see it and surely send a message to the bishop the next time one of his riders came by. Or the horse could trot off down the street and be gone. Rachel sighed, made up her mind, and for the first time since the Death, opened the door to the basement.

It was dark, and without thinking her hand flipped the switch to the stairwell light. Nothing happened, of course; her hands were as caught in the past as her eyes. She felt her way down the steps, until her eyes adjusted to the dim light filtering in from the basement windows, and tried to ignore the scurrying sounds of who knew how many rodents.

The long hall had two bedrooms opening off each side, the children's, and beyond them, a family room on one side, a laundry room and storeroom on the other.

The children's bedrooms. Rachel stared straight ahead, as if she wore blinders, and walked quickly past them, directly to the storeroom. She had no idea what might still be there.

Shortly after the Death, a young man had come to her door and explained that he was now the bishop.

"*Bishop?*" she had asked incredulously. When she'd married David and joined the Church, she'd had to get used to the idea that Mormon bishops were leaders of congregations, like parish priests, not high-ranking officials. Even so, she'd never seen one so young.

He'd shrugged in embarrassment. "Nobody older left," he'd said, offering sympathy amid apologies for not being able to do more. "We're trying to see that everyone has water. Gas and electricity will be impossible for a while. There are so few of us left ..."

And Rachel, sitting alone in her empty house, had nodded numbly. "Take what you need from the storeroom," she had said, thinking, *and if you take it all and leave me nothing so that I die, so much the better.*

But he hadn't taken any of it. Food was not in short supply, people were. Instead he had moved David's things downstairs to one of

Her dreams and her memories conspired against her—refusing to let her rest—and her eyes and ears still lived in the past.

the children's rooms. Then he'd lugged the five-gallon water containers up the stairs and brought much of the food up to the kitchen pantry, as if he'd known that the trip past her children's bedrooms to the storeroom was more than she could endure, was too great a price for survival.

That had been almost seven months ago. Since then, the bishop had dropped by from time to time, making sure that Rachel's pantry was never empty.

Now, surveying the room, Rachel was surprised to see a few plastic containers of wheat and oats still left. The shelves that once held canned goods were empty, and the pile of blankets and the emergency candles were gone. But two industrial-sized boxes of laundry detergent remained, along with eight or so containers of dish soap, rows and rows of empty canning jars beside her old canner, and several packages of lids.

All of this, with gaps where the bishop had moved things upstairs, lined the shelves on three of the storeroom walls. The fourth was heaped with personal things: old sleeping bags; tin scout dishes interspersed with some of David's tools; dusty, plastic milk containers, and broken-handled peanut-butter buckets.

There might be a rope in the scout stuff. Rachel began rummaging through the things piled on the shelf. She found an old can of nails, a roll of twine that was too thin to use on a horse, two backpacks, a pair of rusted grass clippers, a can of congealed paint, a mud-encrusted table knife: odds and ends from a world that had existed less than a year ago but now was gone forever.

But no rope. She picked through everything one more time and was about to give up when she noticed that one of the sleeping bags was bound by several coils of thick cord. It might just be long enough. She struggled to undo the knot. The bag unrolled as soon as she pulled the rope free. It slid off the shelf to the floor, exposing a dirty sock that had evidently been wrapped inside. She stared at it a long time, then picked it up, aware that her hands were shaking. The size told her the sock had been Aaron's. For a moment, his image filled her mind—15 and lanky, brushing his dark hair back from his eyes as he leaned over her chair asking when, *when* could he get his driving permit?

She dropped the sock, grabbed the rope, her hands trembling so violently that she could barely hold it, and ran out of the storeroom, past the bedrooms, and up the stairs, slamming the door behind her.

She leaned against the door until the shaking subsided and she had caught her breath. Then she went back outside. The horse was gone.

With a little cry, she ran out in the yard, frantic until she saw the mare grazing on the side of the house, out of sight from the front porch. Rachel watched her eat, letting the relief flood over her and her heart slow to a normal beat. Finally, she approached the horse.

Liza nickered a greeting and stood calmly while Rachel tied the rope around her neck and led her through the redwood gate to the backyard.

Then she set about to make the horse comfortable: She found an old five-gallon bucket under the cherry tree in the corner of the yard, dumped out the remains of last year's cherry crop, and filled the bucket a gallon at a time from her water supply in the house. The mare drained the bucket in just a few swallows and Rachel realized water was going to be a problem. The men from the Quorum turned on the city water for a couple of hours on Mondays and Thursdays, and Rachel filled her containers, but now she'd need many more. She'd have to use every pot and bowl in her kitchen and the plastic milk containers in the basement.

She grabbed a few handfuls of oats from her pantry and fed them to the mare, then went back inside to search for a brush to groom her.

A few minutes later, while walking around front to make sure both gate latches were secure, she saw Sister Anderson standing on her front porch staring in her direction. Sister Anderson waved, and Rachel sucked in her breath and waved back, wondering just how long her neighbor had been there and just how much she'd seen.

Johnny Calico eased away from the window, taking care to smooth out the gap between the drapes, and sat down on the living room couch with relief. He'd worried that the horse might be wild and unbroken, but it had handled easily enough.

As he did with every house he entered, he found himself comparing the floor plan and the furnishings to those of the Tylers. He preferred the Tyler home, done in what Mom Tyler had called "garage-sale gothic," to almost every house he'd lived in since the Death. For a moment, he lost himself in the ache to be back there with the smell of chicken baking in the oven, and the noise of the younger children squabbling. But the memory carried him quickly from those lost days to the image of Mom Tyler, her face twisted in grief. The image haunted him relentlessly, as if her ghost were following him from place to place, and he realized it didn't matter whether ghosts were real or not. Memories were ghosts enough.

On the day that Dad Tyler had died, one of the men from the Church had come by to offer help. He'd cowered in the doorway of the room, looking, with his gas mask, like some kind of fearful ant as he listened to Dad Tyler's dying words.

"He's only nine. Find someone to take care of him." Dad Tyler could barely rasp out the words—his body was swollen with pockets of blood that puffed out the skin like a balloon. Johnny knew it wouldn't be long until he'd burst, spewing his blood over the whole room, just as every one of the Tylers had before him. Just as Mom Tyler had done.

"Find someone to take care of him," Dad Tyler had said, panting from the pain and effort of speaking. "His family's on the reservation. Probably all dead."

Probably all dead. The words stung Johnny back to the horse he'd just seen Graylady catch. That horse was his way back to his grandfather. *Probably dead.* But the *Dine* weren't like the *Belagonas*, stupidly staying together in the house while one after another died, stupidly taking care of each other until everyone, *everyone,* was dying

and blood stained the floors of every home. Hadn't his grandfather told him that in the old days, when someone was ill, everyone left the hogan? And if the person died, the hogan was burned so the disease would die too?

No, he didn't think they were dead. And the horse would give him the way back to them. It was the first horse that he'd seen since the men from the Church had come and gathered up the animals left in the fields in the early days after the Death. When he'd decided to go back to the reservation, Johnny had considered trying to get one of the horses, but there was always a guard on the corrals, rifle in hand, and he'd settled on the bike instead.

Now, a horse had been sent to him.

He jumped off the couch and searched the kitchen for a few plastic bags and a can opener, then went down to the basement storeroom, a feature of almost every house in Utah, and a welcome one. Johnny wondered how he would have survived the winter otherwise.

"What are you going to do with all of it?" he had asked Mom Tyler the first time he'd seen the shelves of their storeroom spilling over with canned goods, bottled fruit, and bucket after bucket of wheat. It was the day he'd arrived and they were giving him a tour of the house.

Mom Tyler had laughed, her face lighting up. "Well, we've been told by the Church to store a year's supply of food. To be prepared in case Dan lost his job, or there was a famine. For hard times." Johnny was six then, and fascinated by her blondness, her blue eyes, the gray against the yellow in her hair. He learned later that she thought herself middle-aged and dumpy, but to him her very fairness made her beautiful. She was as much a mystery to him as this Church that drove the Tylers to sit uncomfortably in endless meetings, that made them fill up their basements with buckets of wheat.

"To be prepared," Mom Tyler had said, but no one had been prepared for the Death, and now the wheat sat in the storerooms of empty houses that stank of blood.

Johnny helped himself to a quart of bottled apricots and some spoonfuls of peanut butter, and then filled the plastic bags with freeze-dried apples and oatmeal while he planned how to get the horse. He would have to get the saddle and bridle as soon as it was dark, using the bike to bring it all back. A halter and a lead rope, too, if he could find them. He'd seen all sorts of tack in the storeroom of one of the houses just a few months back. He hoped he could remember where it was. He had his supply of food and some canteens ready to go, but he probably ought to find a few more backpacks and fill them with oats for the horse. And maybe some extra canteens if he could fit them on the saddle. He'd have to find water along the way. That would get harder the farther south he traveled.

But he had to hurry. If he didn't act soon, the men from the Church would find the horse and take it back to the corrals, and then it would be too late.

Liza, you're beautiful." Rachel pulled the comb, an old hair pick now relegated to Liza's grooming ensemble, through one last knot. She had brushed, combed, and groomed Liza for most of the afternoon, trying to coax the sweat and dirt out of Liza's woolly winter coat, and although the mare still looked shaggy, she had a new shine.

With a start, Rachel realized that it was almost dark. The day, which usually stretched like a death sentence before her, had flown by without her even taking notice.

Yes, you're beautiful, thought Rachel, and was surprised to find herself humming. She kissed the mare's nose and stroked her forehead. She gave Liza a final pat and then went inside, as happy as if she were in love.

Johnny had finished loading the bike and was sitting beside it waiting for it to get dark when he heard the truck come down the street. For a moment, he thought it was stopping in front of his house, and he stood frozen by the side door, ready to run out in panic, leaving the bike, saddle, and everything behind. But then he realized that the truck was parking in the driveway next door.

He stayed by the door, his heart pounding, his hand on the knob, wondering why the truck had come, remembering the trucks that drove through the neighborhoods during the Death—men tossing gas masks onto each porch and instructing the people on the loudspeaker to stay at home. "Do *not* go to the hospital or to your doctor's office. They will be unable to help you. Your family's rate of infection will be much greater if you leave your home."

The Tylers had not left their house. The infection rate in their home had been a hundred percent. And Mom Tyler had cared for everyone of them. *Stupidly* cared for every *one* until there was only her and Dad Tyler left, and then they were dead too. Stupid, stupid, *stupid*. The first people to get sick should have been locked away right at the beginning and kept far from the healthy. Anything else was stupid.

There had been other trucks, too, carrying men in space-type suits who went from house to house, picking up bodies to be burned, and

This Job, she wanted to say, must have been pretty weak-willed, taking whatever God dished out. And fickle.

the air in the city had been thick with the stink of corpses. They missed a few of the houses. Every now and then, Johnny came across one; the stench would hit him before he barely had the window or the door cracked open and he'd slam it shut and be gone.

Now, from the truck outside, Johnny heard some talking, a little muted laughter. He waited by the door for a short time, but couldn't stand not knowing what was going on, so he slipped back into the house and found a window that gave him a view. Two men were loading a dresser into the back of a flatbed with built-up sides, while an older man looked on. They were moving the old man, Johnny guessed, and others, too, because the truck was already three-quarters full. Where were they taking them?

The move stretched into the night; an argument broke out between the old man and the movers; bits of conversation floated over to Johnny like sparks in the night air while he fretted over the loss of each minute of darkness. The horse would probably be gone, and the saddle and halter, and the big, wonderful saddlebags that he'd found with the other tack would all be useless. He'd already lost one night because he hadn't remembered correctly which house had the tack, and he'd ended up searching half a subdivision. By the time he'd found it, it had been too light to go outside. So he'd waited all day only to be trapped now by the stupid truck. What kind of luck was that to have a truck arrive next door in a nearly empty city? Sometimes it just seemed too hard.

"Well," Bishop Mecham said as he sat in Rachel's dining room, shifting uncomfortably on the wooden chair as if it were only the seat of the chair that was painful, "we'll have to get one of the Quorum's riders to come and take it to the Church corrals in Provo. I haven't heard of a missing horse, but then anyone keeping an animal illegally might not report it."

Rachel didn't know what to say. She always had a hard time when Bishop Mecham visited. His presence seemed to suck all the words out of her. Maybe it was his age. He was only two years older than Aaron would have been, and here he was called to serve a popula-

tion a fraction of the size of the Church he'd previously attended, spread out over an area a hundred times as large.

This time, his visit was more than awkward because as he had ridden up to her house, Liza had thrown her nose up to the fence and whinnied loudly. And Rachel had cursed her own foolishness for thinking that she could keep Liza secret, for not remembering that of course horses would whinny to each other.

Rachel took a deep breath and then another, trying to calm the beating of her heart. "I'm keeping her," she said. Bishop Mecham ran a hand over his neatly combed brown hair; he stroked his chin that looked as if it took three days to grow enough beard to merit a shave, and cleared his throat for the sixth time in the half-hour or so since he'd arrived. "Have you thought about how you are going to feed this horse?"

Into Rachel's stony silence, he continued, "You know, I didn't come about the horse. The Quorum has decided that it would be safer and make more sense economically to move everyone in the valley to a central location. The only reason we haven't done it sooner is, well—nobody knew if the Death would come back. But it seems safe now, and it just makes sense to move people close together. We can fight the fires more effectively, defend ourselves better, make sure everyone's taken care of. So even if we take the horse to the corrals, you'll probably be able to see it."

Her, thought Rachel. See *her*. Had he talked this formally before the Death or had his conversation then been cars and girls all clothed in slang? Would Aaron have talked this way if he had survived?

"So," he continued, fidgeting even more in the chair so that Rachel knew he was getting to the hard part, "so, we're here to tell you to get prepared to move. We're going to relocate everyone to central Provo. There are, of course, plenty of houses that are ..." he cleared his throat again, "that are ... um ... unoccupied. The Quorum has asked everyone to pack up their personal items and get ready. They'll be bringing a truck around but they're asking everyone to limit what they bring to personal goods and a favorite piece of furniture so that they can move several families in a trip. Gas, you know, is very limited."

What could she say? She couldn't think of a single clear reason to tell him *why* she couldn't "relocate," couldn't leave her house with Timpanogas framed in the living room window, couldn't leave the children's' rooms beneath her, couldn't give up Liza. If only David were here, he would have known what to say. If only David were here ... her eyes suddenly watered. Damn eyes! Always betraying her, and now the bishop was squirming on the seat looking genuinely distressed.

"I'm not leaving," she said.

"I ... I know it's been lonely ... it's been unspeakably hard for you." He swallowed nervously. "I don't think Job had it any worse than what we've been through. We've just got to keep the faith—keep on trying." He sighed and rubbed his hand over his hair again. "One ... one of the advantages of moving all the survivors closer together will be ... well, most of the people left are single now. You'll make friends and who knows? Maybe you will even meet someone ..."

The words turned her stomach, all his talk about Job and meeting someone. She wanted David back. David and Aaron and Jared and Bessie. *Meet someone!* She wished she could find the words to make the bishop understand.

This Job, she wanted to say, this Job must have been pretty weak-willed, taking whatever God dished out. And fickle. God stole Job's wife and his children, wrenched them away from him on a bet, no less, and she had never understood why, when God came back and tried to make it all good, when God offered him a new wife and new children, why Job hadn't shaken his fist at heaven and said, "You tore my heart out and scattered the pieces, you took my babies and made them explode with blood and now you want me to *start over*? To *meet someone*? Why he hadn't spat into heaven and said, "Fuck you, God! Don't you understand? There *is* no other wife, there *are* no other children for me than the ones you took away, the ones whose blood flowed until it ran in the streets, the ones I couldn't even *bury* because the men came with pitchforks and threw them in the back of a truck and burned them to stop the plague that knew no stopping."

The bishop was staring at her and Rachel realized that she was crying again.

"I couldn't even bury them," she said when she was able to speak again.

"Maybe it's too soon," he said, his own voice hoarse. His head dropped, and as he watched his feet Rachel remembered that he'd lost family, too, remembered that for seven months he'd carried her food up from the basement.

"Too soon," she managed to say out loud.

There was a long silence. "You'll have to move," the bishop said finally. "It won't be as bad as you think. The houses are nice. And the horse will have to go to the corrals, but you'll be able to see it still."

He had lost family, he had carried food up to her, but there were things he didn't understand. "I won't leave," she said. "I won't give up Liza."

Bishop Mecham rose to his feet with a heavy sigh and said, his voice hard-edged, "I wish we had the luxury of choices, but we don't. We have to move you for your own protection whether you want to go or not."

He left, then, without another word, climbing on his horse awkwardly and riding down the road to Sister Anderson's.

Rachel stood by the window and watched until he disappeared inside the house. Then, taking a table knife from the kitchen, she went down to the storeroom to the shelves on the north wall. She felt along the mortarline of the bricks above the top shelf until her fingers met a crack. She poked and pried the knife into the crack; finally the brick above it loosened and she was able to dig it and its neighbor from the wall. A little cavity lay behind the bricks; it contained a pistol and several boxes of bullets.

Rachel had to wipe her hands against her pants to get the sweat off, and her fingers were trembling as she loaded the gun, but she remembered all of David's instructions, remembered his arm lightly draped over her as he had explained how to load. When he had bought the gun, she had insisted that he take her to a range and teach her how to shoot it. "I don't want something in my house that I don't know how to use," she had said.

And David had grinned and said, "Does that mean you're going to learn to use the chain saw? Program the VCR?"

The sound of his laughter echoed in her ears and seemed to fill the room. Rachel wiped her eyes and snapped the gun shut, and then walked back upstairs to wait.

This is as dark as it's going to get, thought Johnny. He was in the backyard of the house next door to Graylady's, crouched in the bushes, bridle in hand, itching with frustration. Graylady had brushed the horse, she had combed its mane, combed its tail, combed its forelock, picked its hoofs, talked to it, sung to it, and finally just sat and watched it, until Johnny thought she would never go in the house. By the time she did, it was well after dark and all Johnny got for his waiting was the knowledge that Graylady had named the horse Liza. It angered him, how she doted over the animal, over his horse, clearly sent to him so he could get to his grandfather.

Now the Moon was cresting the eastern mountains and the night was going to be lighter than he wished, but he didn't dare wait any longer. Seeing the bishop's horse at the house earlier in the afternoon had scared him badly. Someone would be back in the morning to get the horse, Johnny was sure of it.

He'd already waited too long. Between the extra time spent finding the tack, avoiding the movers, and then pushing the overloaded bike across town, it had taken him three nights to get back. He'd stashed his gear and the saddle and blanket in a field about half a mile down the road from Graylady's—far enough away that the noise of the horse being saddled wouldn't be heard.

He stuffed the bridle inside his pants around his waistband so that it wouldn't rattle, pulled himself up to the top of the wooden fence, and dropped softly to the ground on the other side.

There was a nicker and then the thud of hoofs coming toward him—he hoped fervently that Graylady was already asleep.

It'd been over three years, during his last summer on the reservation, since he'd caught a horse. His heart pounding, he eased the bridle out of his clothing, straightened the reins, and then slowly walked up to the mare.

"Come here, come here, Liza," he whispered under his breath. The horse stood still as he slid a hand with a rein around her neck, knotting it loosely. With a tight grip on the reins, he gently pushed the bit against the mare's teeth, worrying that she would fight it. But she accepted the bit, mouthing it peacefully while he pulled the harness over her ears and attached the chin strap.

He untied the reins from around her neck and led her toward the gate. What if it's locked? he thought suddenly, and he could hardly breathe for fear as he came up to it, worrying that Graylady might have chained it shut. Even with the moonlight he couldn't tell until he reached his hand to the latch and felt a rope.

He sighed with relief. A rope he could manage. He began to work the knots—if they didn't come loose, then he'd use his knife. But the knot came undone easily enough, and Johnny slid the rope off the latch.

And then he heard Liza nicker, heard a rustling in the yard, and he whirled to see Graylady standing a few feet from him.

"What are you doing with my horse?" she asked. Her voice sounded rough, as if she'd been crying.

She waved her arm at him and he caught the glint of moonlight on metal, and knew suddenly that she was holding a gun.

Rachel hoped that he couldn't see how her hands were trembling. "Did the bishop send you?" she asked.

"No."

Even in that one word she could hear his surprise at the question. It couldn't have been greater than her surprise at seeing a boy no bigger than Jared, holding the reins.

"Then what are you doing with my horse?"

He was silent for a moment, and then said in a low voice, "She's not really yours. You just took her a few days ago. When she came to your yard."

So, he'd been watching her. Maybe living in one of the houses nearby.

"She's mine now." And always.

He stared at his feet for a minute and then said in a low rush of words, "She was sent to me. I need to get back to the reservation, to my grandfather, and I don't have any other way."

Reservation? she thought. In the dark, she couldn't tell that the boy was Indian. "You think he's still alive?" Rachel flinched at the hardness in her own voice.

The boy raised his head and said a little defiantly, "He's alive. My people are still alive."

Rachel shook her head. "Nobody's alive anymore."

"*They* are," he said, still defiant. "I don't think they ..." his voice trailed off.

"They what?" The gun was heavy in Rachel's hand and she felt foolish standing there holding it, like something out of a movie. How could she ever have thought she could shoot someone?

"They ... I don't think they ... we ... get as sick as the Anglos."

"Everyone got sick with the Death—all over America—hadn't you heard?" But that wasn't true. She hadn't. She'd waited day after day while every member of her family bled out and died, had waited for countless days after that for it to come and claim her, had waited for it, had *wished* for it, and the one time it was wanted it hadn't come.

Even in the moonlight, she could see his nervousness, could see him clench and unclench his fist. He's the same height as Jared, she thought, and wondered how old he was. Nine? Ten? Jared had been 10.

"I ..." he stopped and started to speak several times. Finally he blurted it out, "When I had it I didn't get very sick. I was hardly sick at all." The last part came out like a wail. She heard a sob, heard him take a breath, struggle for control. "Because I'm Navajo," he said in a low voice that still quavered. "So my grandfather's OK."

Rachel opened her mouth, started to say, "You were the one in thousands that survived and you think that means your grandfather is alive? It's not being Navajo, it's just luck. Just plain bad luck." But something in the way he said it, the way an edge of desperation curled around the words, stopped her mouth. *My grandfather's OK*—if she took that from him, his life would stretch endlessly before him, just as hers had before Liza.

Before Liza. She gasped and remembered what he was trying to do. She couldn't give up Liza, give her up to this boy who would probably get killed trying to make it to some remote reservation, where, most likely, everyone was dead.

"I'm sorry," she started to say, "you'll have to find another way—" But she never got it out. She heard the scrape of metal as the latch was thrown back and the whine of the gate hinge, and then the boy was pushing through it, Liza following behind.

"Liza!" she screamed, scrambling to follow.

She ran through the gate, the weeds in the yard twisting under her feet. She could see Liza's rump and then she was alongside her, the boy not too far in front, not too far—he was yanking at the reins, Liza was tossing her head, resisting. Rachel stretched her legs till they hurt, drove them faster, and then, as she came up behind him, dived for the boy.

It was only as she hit the ground with an ear-shattering blast that she remembered she had a gun in her hand.

The sound of the shot had exploded in Johnny's ears, and for a moment he was too dazed to think or know if he'd been hurt. He heard the horse cry out and then the clatter of hoofs on pavement as it ran away. Graylady moaned and rolled off him, and he stretched his arms and legs tentatively, relieved not to feel any pain. Then Graylady startled him with a piercing cry.

"No!" she cried out into the night air, the vowel drawing out into a long lament.

She was sitting on the grass, clutching her arms to her sides, rocking back and forth.

"Are you hurt?" he asked anxiously, but she didn't seem to hear him. He hadn't meant to hurt her.

"No!" she cried out, not to him, but it unnerved him because for a moment her voice had sounded exactly like Mom Tyler's.

"No!" she screamed to the darkness. "Don't take her. Please don't take her. Please don't take her, my Liza. Not my Liza, my precious Liza, my Elizabeth, not my little Bessie. Not her, not her! Don't take my Bessie. She's the only one left!"

She rocked back and forth sobbing softly, shouting out suddenly, "Oh God!" her voice harsh with accusation. "What did they ever do to you, these children, these innocents? God, I wish you could bleed like they bled and die like they died—your blood spilling out all over."

And then she whispered, "Not her, not her, not my Bessie," over and over, rocking back and forth, crying softly.

Johnny stared at her, stunned, as helpless as he'd been with Mom Tyler. She had stood over the beds of her children, tears running down her cheeks, asking over and over, "Dear Jesus, what are you doing?" And he had tried to comfort her, but there was no comfort for what she suffered.

"Shh ... It's OK," he said now to Graylady. She gave no sign that she'd heard him. "Shh ... it's OK." Her crying sounded so like Mom Tyler's that he had to keep looking at her to remind himself who she was, but even so, he couldn't stand it. This time he knew how to stop the crying, and knew suddenly that if he didn't, he'd have two faces haunting him, following him everywhere he went.

"I'll get her back. Shh ... it's OK now." He stood up, not knowing whether he should leave her alone and try to find the horse, or whether he ought to stay with her. Get the horse, he decided, and started down the street, but then he saw the gun gleaming in the moonlight. He picked it up and took a moment to shove it under a bush. Graylady was still crying, oblivious to what he was doing.

It was probably too late anyway. The mare was probably a mile away by now, maybe two, and he'd never catch her and Graylady would never stop crying, just as Mom Tyler had never stopped. He ran down the road after the horse.

He was barely half a block away when he heard the jingle of the bridle. There was Liza, standing in the middle of the road, as if she was waiting for him. He rushed at her and grabbed her bridle and she tossed her head several times, probably remembering how he'd yanked on the reins as he'd pulled her through the gate. But she didn't shy or try to pull away. She stood calmly while he ran his hands over her, reassuring himself that she hadn't been shot, and then pulled ahead as he led her back to Graylady's yard so that he almost had to run to keep up. For the first time, he wondered if the horse had been sent to *him* after all, but it didn't matter anymore, nothing mattered but Graylady's cries, cutting into the night, into his heart with Mom Tyler's voice that couldn't be stopped.

"Shh … don't cry," he had said to Mom Tyler, but it hadn't done any good. She had wept for each child and Johnny hadn't been able to help her. He hadn't been able to bring them back, those children he'd stolen from her by bringing the Death into their household, by being the first one to get sick with his stupid Navajo blood. His stupid, *stupid* Navajo blood that had killed all the Tylers, and maybe even the whole city because he didn't remember hearing about anyone being sick before he was. Maybe even the whole world, maybe he'd killed the whole world. And he had hardly been sick, he had *hardly been sick* while every one of her children had died. If they had stayed away from him, if Mom Tyler hadn't taken care of him, if only they'd shut him up away from the others …

He brought the horse up to Graylady. In the moon-gray light she looked much as she had on the day Johnny had first seen her.

"Shh … shh, here she is," he said, and he folded the reins into Graylady's hands, giving her back her heart as he was never able to do for Mom Tyler.

And Graylady closed her hands over the reins and looked up at him, amazement shining through the tears on her face.

"Thank you," she whispered.

At first, Rachel couldn't understand. He had taken her Bessie. In spite of endless prayers and pleadings, he had taken her, taken her last baby and cruelly left her behind with her heart eaten away. And now here he was again, standing in front of her. Then her mind cleared and she saw that it was the boy; it was Liza he'd taken, not Bessie. But now she looked at the horse and, even in the moonlight, thought she saw a familiar look in Liza's eyes, thought that maybe she knew where Liza's name had come from after all. Then she dismissed it. What mattered was that Liza was back.

She closed her hands over the reins. "Thank you," she whispered.

Rachel struggled to her feet, stiff from her fall, and flung her arms around Liza's neck, drying her tears on the horse's coat as she breathed in the sweet, horsey smell. And she thought how quickly she'd learned to love this horse, and wondered if maybe she hadn't misjudged Job after all.

Then she turned to the boy. He didn't really look like Jared, this boy who had tried to steal Liza and then miraculously brought her back. What was he going to do, Rachel wondered, now that he had no way to get to this reservation of his, now that he'd put the reins to his dream in her hands? What was he going to do now? For that matter, what was she?

"Thank you," she said again, and was unprepared for his reaction. His body stiffened, he shut his hands into fists and opened them again, his shoulders shook. It took her a minute to realize that he was crying, trying his hardest not to show it, but crying.

She laid a hand on his arm, and then, impulsively, moved toward him and drew him to her, circled her arms around him. She felt him go stiff and start to push away, but then he let go, he fell against her, crying in hard, ragged sobs. She gasped at the pain she felt to be hugging this boy who was not her child, to know that she would never again hold her Jared as she was holding this boy.

After a long time, she dropped her arms, and they stood in the moonlight, silent.

"I can't stay here any longer," she finally said as if to the horse, for she didn't know how the boy would react to the idea growing inside her. "The bishop will come. They're moving everyone to Provo."

The boy didn't say anything. Into the silence she said, "Maybe I ought to go to this reservation where nobody gets sick." She turned and looked at him. "Where is it, anyway?"

"Arizona," he answered in a low voice. "Many Farms, Arizona."

My God! she thought. Hundreds of miles, most of it desert. He'd never make it. But maybe … maybe if she went with him, she could convince him not to try. They could go south until they were safely away from the bishop and find an empty house with some good grazing nearby. If he'd agree to go with her.

He hadn't been able to bring them back, those children he'd stolen from her by bringing Death into their household.

She said, "I have to leave and I don't know where to go. And I don't know how to ride bareback."

Another long silence. Rachel stroked Liza, waiting, watching the boy's fists clench and unclench. Finally, he said, "I have a saddle. In a field down the road." He paused, then added, "We could take turns riding in front."

"What about food? And bad weather? And water?"

"I have food and water for me," he said. A trace of eagerness crept into his voice and it pierced her. "And a rifle to shoot rabbits. But there's room in the saddle bags for more. Could you bring some dried food and canteens?"

"There's food in my basement," Rachel said.

"And bullets. For the pistol."

She nodded, and left him to go one last time down to the storeroom.

The candlelight flickered in the room, throwing shadows against the wall, throwing memories to light. She remembered the day she had come down for a jar of tomatoes and had found Bessie and a friend sitting on the floor, grains of wheat and corn strewn around them, juice from an opened bottle of peaches puddled on the floor.

She had started to scold, but Bessie greeted her so cheerfully, that Rachel swallowed her anger and asked instead, "What are you doing?"

"We're playing harden times," she said. "See? When harden times come, this is what we eat." And she had giggled, stuffing a handful of oats into her mouth.

Rachel let the image of Bessie, her beautiful red-haired Bessie, fade in the flicker of the candlelight. Harden times, she thought. They had worked and stored, preparing to survive the worse, never imaging that the worst might be that someone would survive. Alone.

She picked up the bulging backpack and the canteens that she would fill upstairs, and then shut the door to the storeroom behind her. Holding the candle in front of her, she opened the door of each bedroom as she passed it and stood for a time staring into the darkness. Finally, she went upstairs to meet the boy.

Sop Doll

You should always be kind to animals—especially if they talk.

Note: *In this original retelling, as in the traditional Jack tale of the same name, the archaic expression "sop doll" refers to the use of your "doll" or hand (or paw) to "sop up" or soak up meat gravy left in a pan.*

Jack left his Mama's house and set out to seek his fortune. Lookin' for a job of work took him to a small village where the men looked right mean and the women looked right hungry. He stopped at a house standin' near a mill at the edge of a pond. At the door he met a dark-eyed miller and his young wife. The woman was unnatural thin, hardly enough meat on her hand to keep her weddin' ring on. Still, her copper-colored hair and pretty green eyes bewitched Jack.

"So you're Jack, are ye?" asked the miller. "I heard tell of you before. Could use me a man like you to rid me of a problem." And he offered for Jack to be his hired man, runnin' the mill and caretakin' it at night.

Drawin' in a breath, the miller's wife said, "You're sendin' the boy to his death and him not long gone from his mammy. That's a pity already but seein' as how he's so handsome and hardy, it's a shame as well." Then she blushed to the very roots of her red hair, and Jack blushed, too.

BY MILBRE BURCH
ILLUSTRATION BY TONY DI TERLIZZI



The miller smiled strangely, seemed to take pleasure in his wife's fears. He told Jack that the last two hired men had ended up dead the first night lyin' by the mill wheel, with their throats tore out. When he said this, smilin' and fiddlin' with his heavy gold weddin' band, his wife paled and turned away. Pale as she was, though, Jack liked her look, wouldn't mind a chance to bring back a little color to her cheeks his own self.

The miller said, "Them other boys couldn't keep they minds on they business or they hands to theyselves once they saw Sary here. She's one of 12, all dark but her, and every one of um's a looker. I took her off her daddy's hands, last of the litter, and the runt. When you got a pretty wife, who's simple, the way Sary is, the night can be long and botherin', wonderin' each time you stir whether she's abed or out on the road meetin' some boy a'travelin' through. On top of that, they say my mill is haunted by witches, gonna suck out your breath, tear out your throat, make you twitch like you got salt under your skin."

He turned his eyes to his wife and his look was mean. Then he spoke again sayin', "I got a suspicion them witches are just a batch of women, what don't know how to please they husbands, rather please theyselves, and I aim to be done with them, either way. Go work my mill and guard it too, Jack, and I'll pay you in copper. They's a cot and a lantern and a fry pan for ye there. You grind the grain the townfolk bring you, so I kin stay here to make sure what belongs to me stays mine." The miller's wife shivered when he said that, and it made Jack wonder.

Well, the short of it was that Jack agreed to take the job, and some salt pork and cider and some kindlin' and went by his self to the mill down the way. As he was leavin' the miller's house, Sary asked him, "My man here says you're a giant killer. But don't you need no weapon to protect you, Jack?"

"No, Ma'am," he said. "Long as I've got my wits."

The day was long with grindin', grindin' whatever grain the townsfolk brought, till the dusk set in, and Jack thought he'd close up the mill. But down the road, a strange woman came, walkin' slowly. And when she came into the yard, Jack was surprised to see she weren't no hag, but a woman in her prime. She had clearly seen some hard times, for one side of a once-purty face bore a long scar and the eye on that side was covered with a patch. Her hair was black and her good eye was a golden one, and she had a grain bag full of seed heads waitin' to be ground. Another man might have turned her away without a thought as she was comin' so late. T'other might have been frightened by her, feral-lookin' as a panther and maybe tetched in the head. Still another might have tried to get her alone in the mill; even a homely woman's got her uses.

But Jack was real polite and respectful. "Evenin', Ma'am," he said, "You come just in time; there's still water comin' in the sluice." She did not speak, stopped short of the door, and gave over the sack of seed kernels. Jack took and ground the grain, then filled her sack with the meal and carried it back to her waitin' in the dooryard.

Her voice reminded him of Sary's when she finally spoke, sayin', "You been good to me, Jack, where others have done me harm." Her hand reached to touch the side of her face where the eye was covered. "Sary said you was a good'un, so I grant you this boon," and she clapped her hand on his, and he felt somethin' in his palm, cold and steely. It was a fine silver knife.

When he looked up again, slow movin' as she'd seemed, the woman was gone. The bag of cornmeal lay at his feet, and there was nothin' on the road but a one-eyed cat sauntering into the brush. He shrugged, picked up the meal bag, and went on back inside.

The sunset painted the mill in twilight colors through 12 small windows, up under the roof line, three to each wall. There, in the gatherin' shadows with no more grain to grind till mornin', Jack began to slice the salt pork into the fry pan usin' the little silver knife. Workin' all day had piqued his thirst so he set down that pretty silver knife and reached for the cider jug, took several long swigs. The boy wasn't used to hard cider and it knocked ol' Jack clean out and sprawled him on the floor. He woke up, still hungry, with his head a'poundin' and a'spinnin'. He thought for a moment that the room was full of cats but once it came to rest again, he found he was alone. Jack looked up at the windows above him and saw a full Moon sittin' in the star-studded quilt of the sky.

Now Jack was not much one to ponder about all that had happened that day, so he just lit the lantern and a small fire, and commenced to cook him his dinner. As the salt pork was sizzlin', givin' off grease, Jack made corn fritters the way his Mama taught him. Suddenly, he heard the thump of cat's paws landin' on a sill. Lookin' up, he saw a cat in the window frame above him and her fur gleamed like burnished copper. She jumped down from the window and padded across the floor toward Jack and the sizzlin' pan of meat and fritters. As she came close, he saw how she was rail thin, with her ribs showin' through. She stopped and sat right up next to him as he tended his dinner. Jack was turnin' the meat, usin' the silver knife. Three times she reached a paw out toward the pan, mewlin' in a strange voice, "Sop doll," and each time he warned her away by brandishin' the knife.

Till at last Jack said: "Don't you go soppin' in the pan. Keep your ol' sop doll out of the supper. It's bad enough to be hungry without bein' burned to boot. I'll give ye some, just let me cook it through." When the meat was done on both sides, and the fritters was golden brown, Jack, he kept his word and served half to the cat. "Can't offer ye nothin' to drink," he said, "the cider's got a wallop." The cat rubbed her chin over the back of his hand and they ate together in silence. When she was done, she licked her paws and washed her whiskers. Last of all, she brushed her sleek body past him and flicked his cheek with the tip of her tail before skitterin' off into the shadows.

Jack yawned and stretched lithe as a tom cat, pulled the cot over by the dyin' fire, turned down the lantern, wrapped up in his raggedy coat, and lay down to wait for day. He had hardly closed his eyes when he sensed someone close by, heard the soft mewlin' of a cat, and opened his eyes to see Sary there with roses in her cheeks, tuckin' a quilt around him. "I thank you for your kindness, Jack, to me and to my black-haired sister. Say nothin' of what you might see tonight, keep your wits and your silver knife sharp till you need 'em, and you may live." She pulled back away from him, her green eyes movin' to the windows up under the roof line.

Jack looked up to see what Sary saw: 11 dark shapes congregatin' in those small windows high above. The 12th window was empty, but a low shape came again out of the shadows and into the center of the room. As the moonlight fell on her, a copper cat moved on all fours. She greeted her sisters with a great "merow" and they answered her with a chorus of cat calls. Then the largest one, black as midnight with one golden eye, spoke aloud in a familiar voice, sayin' "Little sister, your husband is determined to plague us, maybe even kill us for this little time we spend together. And now he's done sent another boy to shoo us away and get his self killed for his trouble."

"Keep your wits and your silver knife

The copper cat answered in Sary's voice, "No, this one's different. This here's Jack, the giant-killer. He knows how to hold his temper and his tongue. And he won't let his self be hounded, won't have no hissy fit over a host of house pets. You'll see."

"Well, he's got the knife, so we've done what we can, I reckon," said the one with the night sky fur. "Your man'll come directly with his hound dogs to worry us. He feeds 'em better'n he feeds you, but they got a taste for blood. By now he's missed you at home and will come and loose them dogs on Jack like he always done before. Once they've killed the boy, he'll search Jack's pockets for gold. It's the miller his self who haunts this mill."

"Help me then, sisters," said Sary, her fur shiny like a penny givin' back the Moon's light. "Let's see if we can't change the way this story's told." The cats looked one to the other and then jumped down from their window perches, and moved toward Jack like heavy fog comin' in across the highlands. They circled round and round the cot, purrin' a prayer-spell for his protection.

He lay still, wide-eyed, and when the copper one jumped upon the foot of his cot, Jack asked her, "So do you be witches, Sary?"

"Shape-shifters mostly, it runs in our family," she said. "But Jack, ye should know that my sister's right. My man is probably headed here now, and you might do well to run while you can, you see, he's...."

The night was split with the noisy howlin' of a pack of dogs, and 11 cats scattered and scrambled back up the walls to the windowsills above. Only the copper one stayed by Jack's side. She looked up to him and said, "I'm simple, Jack, not like you. But even if I had my wits for a weapon, tonight I'd use the knife. Cut him, Jack. Cut him with the silver knife. It's the only way to stop him for good." Jack reached down and scooped the knife up out of the fry pan, slid it clean against his trouser leg, and slipped it into his pocket, as the cat jumped up to her perch. Last thing he did was to gather the bag full of cornmeal up next to him on the bed.

The door opened with a long, slow creak and the miller with near a dozen dogs padded into the room and stood at bay. The dark-eyed man seemed to sniff the air, his dogs ranged round him in a pack, their teeth bared, their noses high. "Where is she, Jack?" he asked. "I can smell she's been here. Her and her sisters."

"Don't know what you mean," says Jack, yawnin' and stretchin', but otherwise lyin' still. He saw no need to move too quick and startle them dogs. "I been asleep since supper."

The miller advanced on Jack and his hounds circled round the narrow bed. "Don't lie to me, boy. I see she brought our weddin' quilt to warm you, and I smell your fear. Yessir, it smells real sweet to me and my dogs." Jack heard a rumble in the throats of the hounds. "Didn't my Sary come to you, tell you she was hungry 'cause I like to keep her weak? What she really wanted was to get you in the dark, kiss your mouth, suck your breath, tear out your throat like she did them other boys."

His tone made Jack shiver and sit up slowly, one hand movin' into his pocket to close around the knife, t'other tightenin' on the collar of the meal bag. The copper cat was just above him in the window. Now just 'cause you've killed a giant doesn't mean you never get afraid, and Jack knew to pay attention to his own gooseflesh. With the miller comin' toward him and the witch-cat at his back, he wasn't sure where to turn. Then he remembered that prayer ring them cats had made for him. "I reckon you got Sary wrong," Jack said softly. "Why don't you try to gentle up on her 'stead of bein' so mean and suspicious? She'd be a right good wife to a good husband."

As Jack spoke he heard the man make a low sound deep in his throat and saw him bend his body and start to crouch as he moved the last few feet to the bed. By the time the miller reached Jack's side, he was movin' on all fours, a great, slaverin' hound o' hell with sharp teeth and powerful jaws. The creature sniffed the pan left by the bed. "Sop doll," he said in a voice like thunder gatherin' at the edge of the night. "Is that what she said to you? Well, I'm gonna sop your blood tonight, Jack. Come on now, I'm hungry for you. I'll tear your throat and sop your blood and the dogs'll get the rest."

The moment the miller sprang at Jack with his fangs bared, Jack slit the meal bag wide open and hefted that cornmeal into the air between them. The miller got a face full, and a gritty cloud of meal descended on the rest of the dogs. The strangled sounds of coughin' and chokin' filled the room.

That's when Sary and her sisters sprang as well. Pourin' out of the windows like a cascade of water made somehow sharp, each one landed astride a dog to scratch out his eyes or bite off an ear or rake his snout to ribbons while she rode him round the room and out the door. The night outside was full of yaps and yelps as the cats herded them dogs home.

Sary leapt down upon the miller's shoulders even as he managed to pin Jack to the bed with his great front paws. Jack's forearm was deep in his jaws, and the hand holdin' the knife was trapped against the straw mattress. So Sary scrabbled backways down the miller's spine, and reachin' round his tail, she scratched at him hard beneath it. The hound's throaty growlin' changed to a cry of pain and surprise and grief, as Jack got aloose from him and slashin' against him with the silver knife, lopped off one of his big front paws.

sharp till you need 'em and you may live."

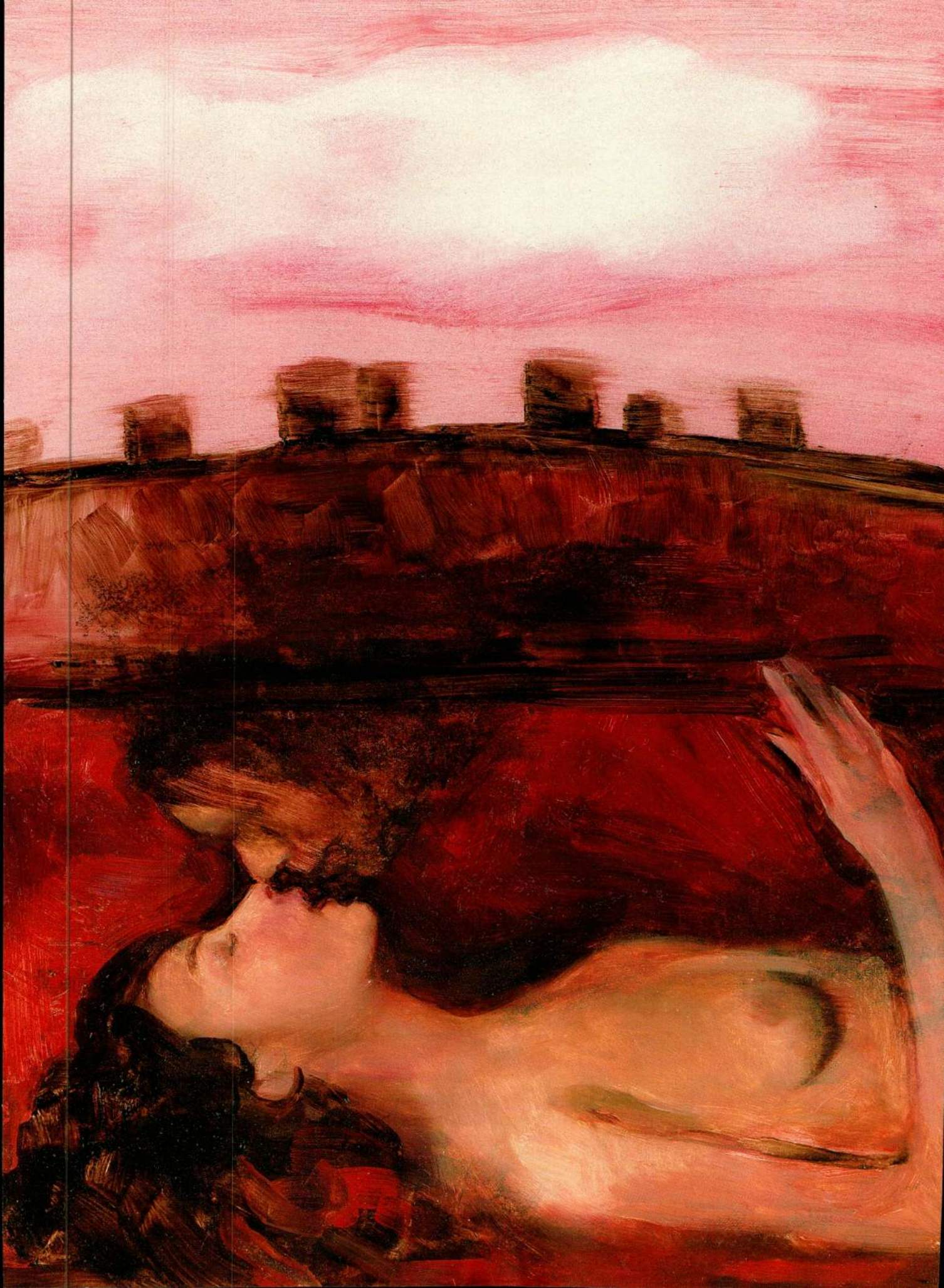
The hound stumbled backward off the cot. Jack heard Sary's "merow" as she skidded off the miller's back and across the floor. The wounded dog staggered and rolled on his back in a hot spreadin' pool of his own blood, before crawlin' on three legs to the door and out into the night. "Sary?" Jack called softly, "Are ye all right?"

"Better'n that, Jack, thanks to you," said Sary walkin' toward him on two feet. She bent and lit the lantern. Jack stood up quick when he saw what lay at his feet: a man's hand, dusted in cornmeal, with the miller's weddin' band glintin' on one finger. "I scratched him up good, but you cut him with the silver knife, Jack. Now he can't come back to bein' a man. Won't make much of a huntin' dog neither I reckon. You keep the knife, Jack," she said, "in case you need to use it again."

Then she sopped the miller's blood in the quilt's scalloped hem. When she was done, she slipped her own weddin' band off and dropped it into her husband's open palm. She wrapped the bloody thing in the slit meal sack and laid it deep in the bedclothes, banked the fire, and burned the bundle clear to ash.

Jack stayed on some time at that house, till Sary's sisters had learned the mill trade real good. Some of the men in town stayed away from that place, but most folks used the mill right often. At night, Jack sometimes heard a howlin'—mournful, though, not threatenin' atall. The three-legged hound dog was scarcely ever seen, and ever time he was, he had his tail between his legs.

Once Sary's sisters was set, Jack hit the road again to seek more adventures. Some even say one time, he married a king's daughter. But since she don't show up in any of the other tales, I don't put no stock in that. Still, I did hear tell, that wherever he went and whatever he did, Jack always kep' a copper-colored cat close by his side. ❧



THE PREMATURE BURIALS

Until death do you part? Sorry. You're not getting off that easily.

LOOKING UP. Matthew saw pictures in the ripples and dimples of satin as if they were layers of clouds over Munson's Hill. There, in the far corner: That drape looked like one of Mr. Venable's cantankerous swans. And just overhead was the familiar lumpy profile of Mr. Krohn the wheelwright, mouth yawning wide.

Matthew grinned at the thought of fat Mr. Krohn wedged into this narrow space. He slowly, noiselessly, slid his arms and legs outward until they met the soft, adamant walls to left and right. Then gradually, in tortuous, tense increments, he raised trembling hands and feet until knuckles and bare toes were buried in the satin of the ceiling and could rise no farther.

Not much room even for Matthew, eight years old last Tuesday, but for Mr. Krohn? No standard-sized box for him. Maybe they'd just knock the wheels off one of Mr. Krohn's own wagons, take down his barn door, and saw him a lid to fit.

Matthew came perilously close to giggling, in this space too small for both a medium-sized boy and a good-sized laugh. He froze, lips pursed and bulging, as murmuring voices approached his sanctuary from the world beyond the lid.

Matthew had noticed, long before his eyes adjusted to the dark, the dust-thin creases of light that outlined the lid on three sides. Matthew, a butcher's son, had speculated wildly on the effects of this unexpected ventilation. Now shadows crawled the length of the longest seam, filling it. Matthew heard a woman snuffling, and then the deep and placid voice of Mr. Marsh, whose words sounded recited, like Scripture.

BY ANDY DUNCAN • ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN JOHNSON

"And this is, of course, one of our simpler models, but nonetheless popular, for reasons I'm sure you can discern for yourselves. Simple yet elegant, qualities for which your aunt herself was, if I may say so, quite well known in life."

A whimper of ladylike assent emerged from the snuffles before being choked off, and another man's voice said: "Indeed. Might this model, like the mahogany, be fitted with a bell?"

"Yes, of course," Mr. Marsh said, "or the equally effective speaking tube, which as I have said is a less cumbersome and more frugal option. In either case, your aunt would be guaranteed able to summon assistance in the event of—the unspeakable." He rushed the last two words in an awestruck mumble.

"Well, that's a mercy, anyway," the other man said, just as Matthew gave voice to the unspeakable, and sneezed.

All sounds from without ceased. For a thrilling few moments of darkness and silence, Matthew himself froze—the easiest course of action, really, in a space that so limited a boy's options. His heart raced. He felt a strange exultation he'd never felt before. He snapped shut his eyes and folded both hands over his chest just as Mr. Marsh seized the lid and lifted.

The sunshine streaming through the front window was hot on Matthew's cheeks. He opened his eyes to see three faces looking down: the right-side-up face (Mr. Marsh) swollen and agog like a frog forbidden to croak; the first sideways face (the other man) pale and aghast, a deacon's face; the second sideways face (the woman!) mostly black lace and crepe above red lips and perfect teeth, one row parted from the other in surprise. It was at her lovely half-face that Matthew smiled, and to her that he directed his greeting.

"Hullo. Mr. Marsh is quite right. This is a very comfortable model indeed."

Matthew sprang over the side of the coffin before the adults quite registered that he had even sat up. He hit the polished floor running. He skidded around a marble angel and set a candelabrum ominously rocking as he dashed for the door. Behind him the two men called for him to stop and denounced him as an ill-bred urchin, a vagabond, a ragamuffin. The woman's laughter rang out over their futility as clear and as strong as any of Mr. Marsh's old coffin bells.

Matthew ran out of the shop and into the muddy street and slid unscathed directly across the path of a rearing carriage horse. Heedless beneath flashing hoofs, exultant between toe-shaped gushes of mud, Matthew began his lifelong vivid recollection of the veiled woman's naked astonishment. This private image, tinted and embellished like an illustrated weekly's engraving of Christ, would be especially dominant a few years later, when Matthew began to take a naturally keener interest in the corseted half of humanity.

"I must confess to you, Mr. Preble," Miss Charity Gorce told Matthew, "that you are not the first man to ask for my hand in marriage."

"Of that, Miss Gorce, I have no doubt."

"I must tell you, as well, that when your predecessors heard my conditions of marriage, they rescinded their offers, quit this house with more haste than decorum, and never returned—severed all relations with me. In short, Mr. Preble, they fled."

"I could not imagine having the slightest desire to flee your presence, Miss Gorce. I find it most congenial."

"Yes," she said, without inflection. "Well, you're young yet, Mr. Preble—somewhat younger than I am, if I may be so forward, though we need not speak in numeric terms. Perhaps you will be older by the time you leave here. Allow me to examine the evidence for your suit. Oh, you may sit, by the way. I'm sure your knee would be glad of the rest."

Matthew bowed his head graciously and rose from his position at Miss Gorce's feet. Three backward steps brought him to the edge of the cushioned window seat, where he reverently settled himself.

Miss Gorce adjusted her pince-nez and leafed silently through Matthew's papers. Matthew admired the contours of her arms, rather daringly revealed by her stylishly tight sleeves. He admired her face as well. Her high forehead and patrician nose were shared by all the grim ancestors whose surrounding portraits conspired to darken the room. Yet her mouth was comically wide, her eyebrows a single dark swath, her hair asymmetrically askew. Nature had marred her inherited good looks just enough to make her beautiful.

For seemingly the 50th time that afternoon, Matthew had a fleeting image of Miss Gorce splayed beneath him, her corset undone, waiting with an open, smiling mouth to serve as a willing receptacle for his lust. He willed away this wicked and lamentably unlikely picture.

"I remember your father's butcher shop, Mr. Preble," Miss Gorce finally said, "for my mother traded there. I confess I have no recollection of you being anywhere near the place, at least during hours in which work might be done. Since leaving Rochester, however, you seem to have been uncharacteristically industrious. Surveying team in the Aroostook Valley … Commendations from two governments for your role in settling that border dispute … Further surveying, exploring, speculating … These are strange times, Mr. Preble, when a man can make a fortune in land transactions without acquiring any land himself. I presume this is where I, and my family's holdings, come in? No need to protest, Mr. Preble, I'm only joking. Partially. Cultural activities seem in order … Founding sponsor of the New York Philharmonic … Et cetera, et cetera. Well."

She plucked off her spectacles and sat back in her chair, layers of fabrics and petticoats crackling and rustling. With her shoulders back, her bosom was especially prominent. "Let us set aside these papers for a moment."

"Let's," said Matthew, quivering.

"I admit that the months we have spent strolling and taking tea and visiting the infirm on Sundays have been pleasant for me, Mr. Preble."

"Should I die first, my with me. Immediately.

"For me, as well, Miss Gorce."

"As long as I am being blunt, I should add that you are, in your own unique and disheveled way, quite a well-turned-out young man." As she said this, she averted her eyes downward so that she no longer met his gaze. "And so," she said, finally looking up. She was flushed. She cleared her throat and took a deep breath. "I am inclined to accept your proposition, and grant you my hand in marriage."

In the next instant, Matthew was on his knees at her feet once more, seizing her hands in his. "Marvelous! You will not regret this, Miss Gorce. I will be yours until death!"

"And beyond?" she asked, smiling down at him.

"Beyond?"

Her smile faded. She sat forward, pallid and drawn, eyes swimming with ghosts, and clutched his hands until his knuckles grated. "I have but one fear, Mr. Preble," she whispered. "My inheritance has spared me privation and want; my talents and industry have spared me the unreliable mercies of men. But nothing will spare me the chill of the

tomb. My one fear, Mr. Preble, is that I will suffer the fate suffered by all my ancestors on the walls around us—that despite my money, and status, and wit, I will die and be buried alone. I have lived alone for years, and thrive upon it; but to lie in my casket alone—Oh! The dread possibility has me choking and gasping in my bed each night, unable to sleep, unable to breathe, unable to bear the thought of the blanketing, solitary doom that awaits. Do you understand now my conditions of marriage, Mr. Preble?"

Matthew opened his mouth, considered, then snapped it shut and rapidly shook his head.

"Should I die first," Miss Gorce said, "my husband must be buried with me. Immediately. Before another sunset. He must willingly lie, before his time, in an adjoining casket in our mutual plot in the Gorce family cemetery, and sail alongside me into that sea of worms."

"He must be buried alive?" Matthew croaked.

"Alive or dead, the choice is his. Buried, yes; that is my choice. My choice, my desire, my condition of marriage." She smiled faintly. "Shall I have Mr. Sterne bring your hat?"

"And if I die before you?"

She smiled more broadly. "Then I will do you the same favor, Mr. Preble. I will not remain above the soil one day more than you do. That very night, I will lie beside you in the adjacent grave."

Matthew stood, walked to the window, and looked toward fields and sheds that he did not see. He closed his eyes and summoned, as he had countless times before, an elegant mouth beneath black lace and crepe, leaning over a coffin. This time the mouth was Miss Gorce's. Then, in his vision, he was standing above the coffin looking in, as Miss Gorce's lips repeatedly formed the word "Yes."

Surging with tides he could neither name nor deny, he swung round and returned to Miss Gorce's side, where he fervently and repeatedly kissed her hand.

"May I take this as an acceptance?" Miss Gorce asked, a bit breathlessly.

Matthew made no verbal reply.

Her eyes glistening, her broad forehead cleared of furrows, Miss Gorce groped with her free hand for the bell pull, seized it, and yanked it repeatedly. She left it dancing and reached for Matthew's hair, tugging absently but fondly at the upswept curls that spilled over his collar in back.

"For if he loves me with all his heart," she murmured, "of what use will life be to him afterward?"

stamped each of the three copies with the embossed seal of the State of New York.

"So convenient," Miss Gorce breathed into Mr. Preble's ear, "having a notary on the premises."

THE PREBLES WERE AS CONTENT IN MARRIAGE AS ANY COUPLE CAN BE in this fallen world. An early crisis on the question of brunch was defused by the decision to have it each day, only at different times, some days as late as midnight. Over brunch, tea, elevenses, and all other meals (for they were a ravenous pair), they read aloud to each other (and to Sterne, as he shimmered in and out) from *Godey's Lady's Book*, the *Southern Literary Messenger*, *Scientific American*, and all other periodicals, including, most thrillingly, the *Workingman's Advocate*. They imported a saxophone from Belgium, a harmonium from France, and practiced fruitlessly before an audience of each other, for Sterne scheduled his errands judiciously.

They also devoted many more successful hours to perfecting their marital arts, displaying impromptu skills that astonished and gratified in equal measure. Perhaps sensing that the new marrieds were more than normally preoccupied with matters normally left to a procreative God, the mothers of Rochester began propelling their children past the gates of the Gorce mansion at double speed. The Prebles observed this, as they observed everything else, and were happy. Then Mrs. Preble died.

Matthew lay in the dark coffin and sobbed. His cries and moans were close about him. Disgorged from his chest and mouth, they sank into the fabric lining the box and rebounded to nestle, moist, against him. Again and again he choked out his dear wife's name, careless of the squandered air. What use was air, with Charity in the grave?

Through his spasms of grief, Matthew was dimly aware that he now had far less room to maneuver than he had at age eight, inside Mr. Marsh's display model. Unable to flail his arms and legs as he wailed, he twisted and rolled from side to side, bruising his shoulders against the coffin lid. He groaned and cursed like an armless flagellant, and his tormented words crowded the box on all sides. He was awash in nightmare jibberings. The clouds of satin over his head shaped a riot of crawling, leaping, writhing things, the pandemonium of a dozen faiths.

And there, in the cloths to the left—was that lump of fabric not

husband must be buried before another sunset."

The papers had lain for years in a downstairs safe. On many occasions, Miss Gorce's butler, Sterne, had transferred the papers to a silver salver and sat impassively in the pantry, watching the bell, waiting for a signal that never came. Each time, he had needed no further instructions; without troubling his mistress more, he had returned the papers to their felt-lined vault before the suitor's horse had galloped past the willow tree on the corner.

On this day, the jangling resurrection of the so-long-dormant bell caused Sterne no visible surprise. After a pause of only a few seconds, he stood, picked up the salver, and strode from the pantry before the bell had finished tinkling.

Sterne walked silently through a series of ever more ornate doorways, through a series of increasingly well-lighted rooms, and ascended a flight of stairs wide enough for a pedestrian race. At the top, he tapped at the door of Miss Gorce's office.

"Come," she murmured.

Silently, Sterne watched as Matthew and Miss Gorce signed the documents. Then Sterne signed his own name, added the date, and

the placid death-mask of his poor dead Charity, his wife of barely a twelvemonth, who had looked so rosy and fair even on her bier that she scarce seemed a fit candidate for the grave? No doubt, her sure foreknowledge that her husband was willing to lie beside her even in death had eased her soul's dark dread, made her dead cheeks and brow bloom in relief.

But where was Matthew's solace now, as he churned in misery many feet below the heaped earth of the family plot?

The heavy air around him was cotton in a pill box, holding him fixed and suffocating in the center of his prison. He rolled through this cloying ether of misery as a crated carcass in a ship's hold rolls stupidly through lard. Had Charity, blessedly insensible, been spared this ordeal? Ah, Charity! Ah, Matthew! Ah, God!

Such were Matthew's thoughts as he fell, exhausted, into the deepest, most blissful, most untroubled sleep of his life.

Matthew was awakened by a ripping, splintering, grating wail only inches from his face.

More jolts, and something heavy raking along the length of the box.

Twin thumps.

Coughs and murmurs.

A sawing rasp.

A screech.

Then Matthew's skin prickled as the trapped and clammy air released its grip and rushed upward, a dank gasp exhaled into a rectangle of star-flecked sky. Its escape fluttered the coattails and stirred the mutton chops of a black-clad, lantern-haloed figure who straddled the coffin and looked dourly down into the earth, one hand supporting the casket lid.

Matthew lay still and looked up, blinking, uncomprehending.

"Oh, it's you," he said.

"Who else?" Sterne asked, extending a hand.

Matthew allowed himself to be hauled from the hole and propped against the fresh mound of earth. He choked on the brandy that Sterne slopped into his mouth.

"Please, sir," Sterne kept saying. "Please, you must drink."

"Sterne," Matthew rasped. "Sterne. What is happening?"

Sterne fumbled in his waistcoat pocket, drawing forth a sheaf of papers. "If I may explain, sir. I have spent some time studying the agreement that you and my mistress signed before the wedding. I also consulted my cousin, a solicitor in Philadelphia—in strictest confidence, I assure you, sir. He confirmed my interpretation. The document clearly mandates your interment in the event of your wife's death, but makes no provision for the duration of said interment." He waved the paper in front of Matthew, jabbing a gloved finger at the pertinent clause.

"You have exhumed me," Matthew said, ignoring the paper.

"I took that liberty, sir," Sterne said, dropping his eyes.

"Then my wife … lies there still?"

"She does, sir."

Matthew groaned, flung his forearm across his face, and would have expressed his desire to return to the earth, rather than face the sunlight alone, had all his senses not been galvanized by the faint jingling of a tiny bell, such as a gentlewoman might use to summon a lady-in-waiting.

Matthew sat up, his nose nearly meeting Sterne's. The men stared at each other. As one, they turned and regarded the adjacent grave. The bell continued to jingle.

"My wife's coffin—" Matthew began.

"The latest safety features—" Sterne began.

Matthew already was clawing doglike at the dirt with one hand and using the other to yank free squares of freshly laid sod. He flung them over his shoulder, where they puffed into dust on his own yawning casket. A tossed spade thumped into the dirt beside him. As he seized it, he saw Sterne gouge the blade of his own shovel deep into the mound, one grimy spat glimmering white in the glow of the lantern.

Silently, master and servant worked side by side, pelting the landscape with shovelfuls of dirt. As his arms and shoulders pumped like automatons, Matthew's mind ransacked a lifetime's lore concerning those strange diseases that seemed to rebuke the advances of modern medicine. Certain maladies mocked the symptoms of death, caused the temporary cessation of all vital functions except, apparently, the fluttering soul, which later awakened in the most dreadful predicament known to suffering humanity. Merciful God! Still the bell kept ringing—ringing—ringing!—until Matthew's blade jabbed into the casket lid and splintered its tiny belfry at the base. As he and Sterne scrabbled away the remaining layer of earth, the slender, severed bell-pull slithered back into its trap and vanished inside the coffin, as if tugged one last time by an unseen hand falling limp in exhaustion.

"My wife!" cried Matthew, wrenching open the lid.

"My husband!" cried Charity, reaching up to him.

Sterne's lantern then illumined a tender scene. Husband laved wife with muddy kisses as, with his last strength, he bore her out of the grave and laid her gently upon the mound where Sterne had laid him not an hour before. The two collapsed together like the walls of a tent, and in a heap they cradled each other, murmuring endearments.

Sterne, coughing discreetly, dispensed brandy, then retreated to the wagon for some rope. "No need to waste the caskets," he muttered as he went.

"I thought the most terrible moment of my life," Matthew finally said, "was when I entered your bedchamber to find you in the very shape and lineaments of death. But it was nothing compared to the terror I felt here, in this cemetery, when Sterne and I heard your cry for help ring out practically beneath our feet."

Charity tensed alongside him like a rope pulling taut. She moved back a few inches. Matthew did not care for her gaze; she seemed to see him coolly and see him whole.

"Beneath your feet, my angel?" Charity asked. "How could that be, my dove?"

Charity then turned and regarded the open pit of her husband's grave. She craned forward and looked down upon the empty coffin. Then she faced her own grave, studied her own empty casket. She silently looked from one pit to another, her appraising glance that of a vaguely interested customer presented with equally uninviting alternatives.

"My dear—" Matthew said.

"How strange," Charity said, almost to herself, "that Sterne's initial response, upon hearing my call for help, was to go next door and dig you up. Was your help so necessary? I always fancied Sterne more self-sufficient than that."

"My love—" Matthew said.

"If he loves me with all his heart," she said, fully to herself by now, "of what use will life be to him afterward? What use, indeed?" She picked up a clod of clay and fisted it, raining sediment upon her shoe.

"My heart—" Matthew said.

"I think I would like to go back home, now, Mr. Preble," Charity said, in the voice she lately had reserved for tradesmen, shopkeepers, and clergy. "I would like to return to my house, to my bedchamber, to my life, which has been so rudely interrupted, and attempt to forget that all this recent unpleasantness ever happened."

As she spat out the word "unpleasantness," she looked him squarely in the face, as she was not to do again for a very long time.

MANY MONTHS LATER, MATTHEW RETREATED TO THE CASKET.

This time, he did not open his eyes to see what portraits and playlets the satin curtains would unveil. This time, he repaired to the grave only to sleep. He lay still, eyes closed, tried to wedge himself into the sweet, sunny coffin of childhood memory, and willed sweet nepenthe to embrace him.

Night after fitful night, in his new, cold, lonely bedchamber in the servant's wing of the Gorce mansion, he had sought oblivion with insomniac singlemindedness, and had failed utterly. Partially to blame was the bed—a creaking, swaybacked ruin that had been a malevolent secret of the Gorce family for decades, the lot of generations of unwelcome cousins, unwanted drummers, and unnecessary circuit preachers. Its arthritic joints were trussed with baling wire, and its list to starboard would have been even more noticeable but for the prosthetic use of an overturned chamber pot.

At Matthew's direction, Sterne and his tool chest did the malformed bed further injury, lowering the canopy to mere inches from the occupant's nose. Still it did little more than mock the exquisite sleep

"Matthew," Charity said, "come

Matthew had enjoyed in the grave.

Finally, with great reluctance, Sterne heeded his master's pleas. Sterne helped him wrestle the familiar casket into the patient pit (which Mrs. Preble demanded be left open, as evidence of her husband's duplicity). Sterne lowered the lid, then raised it seconds later, as an apparent afterthought, and said—

"Eight hours. No more."

—then closed it again.

At first, Matthew merely fussed and fidgeted. Why had he not brought a decent pillow, rather than rely upon this inadequate felt-covered fist that Mr. Marsh provided all his clients at no extra charge? Furthermore, the intrusive speaking tube that protruded from the lid forced him to hold his head at an unnatural angle, and the cold air that coursed down it all but guaranteed a chill. But Matthew eventually became accustomed to his circumstances, and began to doze. In his half-waking state, he fancied that a beautiful woman reached into his coffin, grasped him by his proudest member, and tugged repeatedly, as if to lift him with one hand alone—succeeding only in producing the most delightful friction, one that sent him smiling into . . . blissful, easeful, soul-repairing sleep!

"Sir.

"Sir, please wake up.

"Your wife, sir—she has need of you."

The sunshine was hot on Matthew's cheeks. But this sun was too close above his face. The lantern illumined Sterne's features from below, doing them no credit; they flickered and danced obscenely.

"What?" Matthew blinked and sat up, slowly. "It's still night. What time is it?" He groped for his watch.

"Three hours till dawn," Sterne said. "I am ahead of my time, sir, but my mistress—your wife—demanded that I wake you."

"My wife?" Matthew was not yet alert enough to envision any scenario in which his wife might desire his presence. "Why, is something wrong? Where is she?"

"She is here, sir," Sterne said. "Alongside you."

Even beyond the lantern light, Sterne's forehead and neck twitched, suggesting a fit of nerves, or an unprecedented display of emotion barely kept in check. He wordlessly helped Matthew clamber out of the pit, then pointed into the adjacent grave.

A closed casket rested there, lightly covered by a shallow layer of earth. Sterne handed Matthew a shovel.

"She wishes for you to dig her up," Sterne said. He walked away, hunching his shoulders against the breeze, vanishing three paces into the gloom.

Dazed, Matthew moved the lantern to the brink of the grave and vaulted into the hole. After a couple of experimental thrusts, he cast away the shovel, for the earth was only a few inches deep. With his hands, he raked away the clods indifferently spread across the mahogany surface in token burial.

He opened the lid.

trousers. "Matthew, my love, what an enchanting—no, exciting—place to consummate your apology!"

"My dear—"

"Matthew," Charity said, "come wake me. Come wake the dead." Tightening her fingers, she hauled violently, throwing him off balance. Matthew fell atop her, and the casket lid thumped down upon his buttocks.

Untended, the lantern burned until nearly dawn.

CASKETS WERE HENCEFORTH AN IMPORTANT FEATURE OF THE PREBLES' domestic life. Funeral parlors welcomed their lingering visits. Porters and doormen cursed and marveled at the weight of their luggage. Sterne quietly purchased enough digging equipment to exhaust a vein of coal, while the children of Rochester, delighted by rumors, paid each other to run past the Prebles' house. By spring 1849, when both Mr. and Mrs. Preble set sail on that doomed Hudson steamer, its boiler ticking down the hours until explosion, the faithful Sterne had lost count of how many times he had buried the both of them.

FOR WEEKS AFTER THE DOUBLE FUNERAL, THOUGH THE OTHER MOURNERS (MOSTLY OUT-OF-TOWNERS) HAD LONG DEPARTED AND RESUMED THEIR LIVES, STERNE LINGERED. FREQUENT TRAVELERS ON THE TURNPIKE THAT SPRING BECAME ACCUSTOMED TO SEEING THE BUGGY TETHERED TO THE GATES OF THE GORCE FAMILY CEMETERY, THE DAPPLED HORSE CROPPING WILD ASPARAGUS IN THE SHADOW OF THE ARCHING WROUGHT-IRON LEGEND:

IT IS A HOLY AND WHOLESOME THOUGHT, TO PRAY FOR THE DEAD.

No one looked inside the buggy to remark on the ropes, the brandy, the shovels.

Sterne took most of his noontime meals in that bee-haunted acre, straddling the sandstone wall within hailing distance of the two fresh, bare graves.

The widow Redfield, observing Sterne's schedule, began visiting her late husband (whose mother was a Gorce) somewhat more frequently than had been her custom. Her appearances became so frequent, in fact, that Sterne no longer could dismiss them as coincidence. In a stoic air of experimentation, he began loading double provisions into his picnic basket each day, and he was not disappointed.

No matter how scintillating the widow Redfield's company, however, he conversed in a polite but abstracted manner, always with one ear cocked, listening for the chimes, the knocks, the muffled halloos that never came.

On the last day of his vigil, while calmly buttering a roll, he said aloud: "I suppose all amusements must come to an end."

TAKE ME. COME WAKE THE DEAD."

Charity, wearing only her shift, looked up at him, smiling, twinkling, cheeks flushed. "Hello, husband," she said.

He blinked. "Hullo."

"Mr. Sterne told me what you were up to, you rogue. Embarrassing the poor man like that."

"Beg pardon?"

She reached up with both hands and twined her long fingers into the frills on the front of his shirt. She tried to imitate Sterne's familiar rumble. "He's out there in the cemetery, ma'am. Really and truly in it, I mean. Says life has no meaning for him anymore, and he won't emerge—begging your pardon, ma'am—until you come out there and save him." Her laugh was like the sweet jingle of a coffin bell, as she raised one bare foot, sidling it along the folds of his

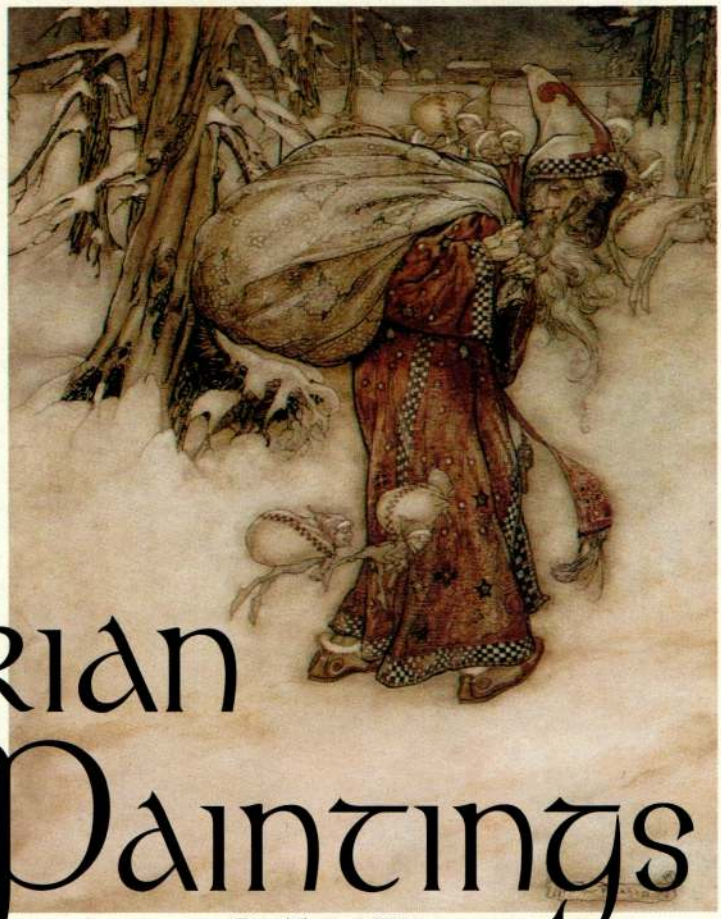
"Oh, Mr. Sterne," the widow Redfield said, suddenly pale.

"Eh?" Trained to react to far subtler inflections, he looked up, butter knife poised. "Oh, I don't mean our visits, Mrs. Redfield. You misunderstand me. I was thinking aloud ... about a private joke, of long standing, between my mistress and master, and me." He nodded in their direction.

The widow Redfield dimpled anew, smacked a droning yellowjacket with one of Mr. Marsh's advertising fans, and asked: "Why, Mr. Sterne. Are you a man who appreciates amusements, then?" She threw her shoulders back, emphasizing her already considerable bosom.

"Increasingly so, Mrs. Redfield," he replied, and popped the entire golden roll into his mouth. ❧

The Golden Age of Fairy Painting casts its spell on artists to the present day.



Victorian Fairy Paintings

By Terri Windling

According to art historians, The Golden Age of Fairy Painting occurred in 19th-century England during the reign of Queen Victoria, casting its spell of enchantment on artists right up to the present day. During that time, fairy pictures by eminent painters were hung in respectable galleries, viewed by the kind of large audiences that now flock to blockbuster films.

A number of factors combined to make Fairyland so appealing to Victorian artists. First, using imagery from British folklore (and from home-grown writers such as Shakespeare, Pope, or the Romantic poets) seemed a breath of fresh air to artists trained in the Royal Academy tradition, in which classical or historical tales were touted as the "proper" subject matter for serious paintings. Second, pictures of fairies and sprites in lushly romantic natural settings were an aesthetic reaction to the gritty, smoky, mechanized world of the Industrial Revolution, when large tracts of English countryside swiftly vanished beneath mortar and brick. (This also was a factor in the concurrent interest in Medievalism, promoted by the Pre-Raphaelites as an antidote to modern, mass-produced life.) Third, "folklore" was a new and exciting area of scholarship, giving old country tales about spirits and fairies a cachet they'd previously lacked. Victorian interest in the "unseen world" was also evident in Spiritualism (seances, spirit possession, etc.), a fad that swept like wildfire through all classes of society. Finally, the widespread, casual use of medicines derived from opium no doubt played some part in the 19th-century taste for fantastic imagery … as well as the fact that many of these "innocent" paintings of elves, undines, and sylphs fairly dripped with sexuality, at a time when sex was at its most repressed in polite British culture.



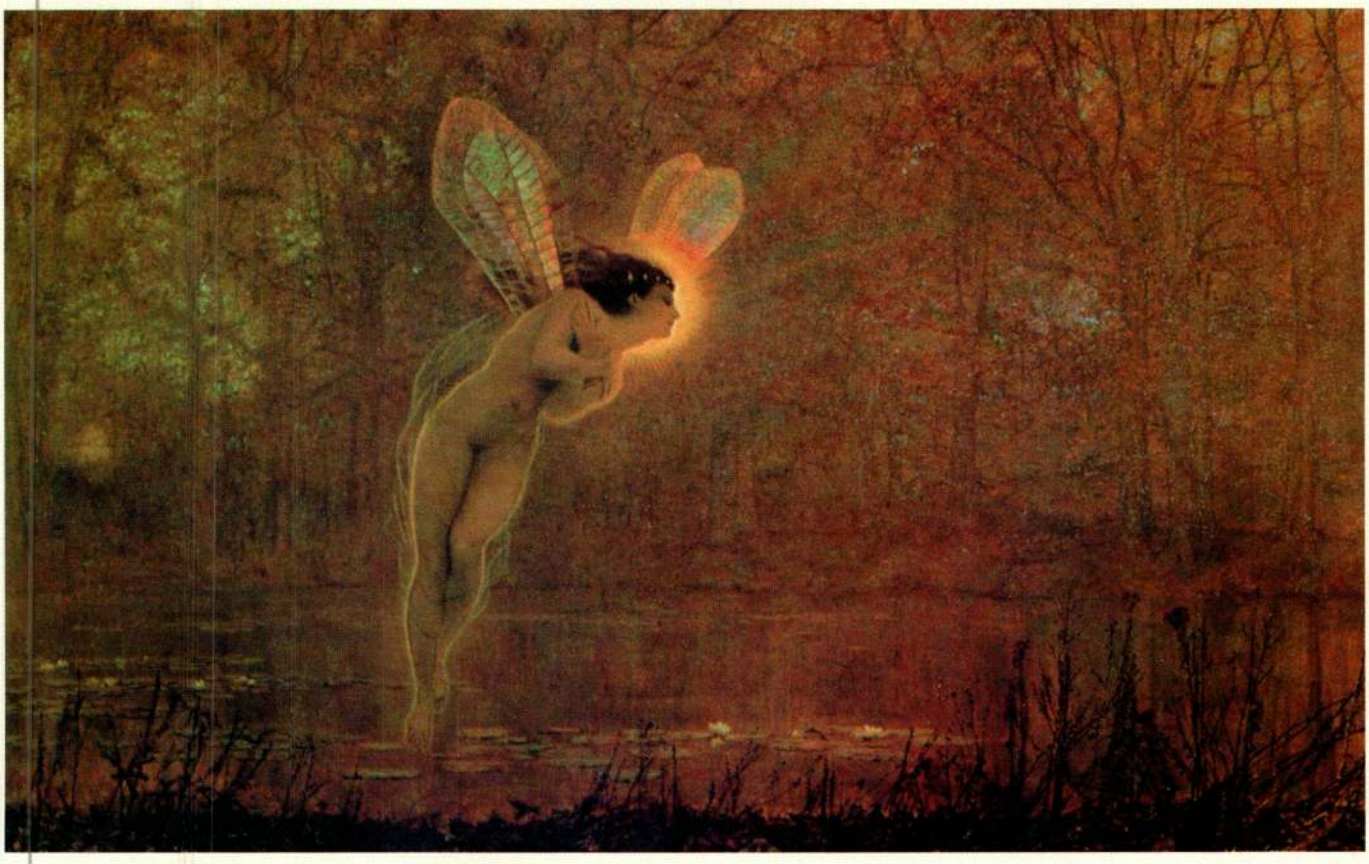
The Victorian obsession with Fairyland has its roots in the previous century, where the subject was explored by the Romantic poets and painters such as Fuseli and Blake—the latter of whom made no bones about his personal belief in fairies. In the 19th century, the emergence of Romantic ballet, often with fairy themes, had a strong influence on a number of painters, as did the very first English publication of the Grimms' fairy tales (in 1823) and the popularity of texts by the German Romantics such as Goethe and de la Motte Fouqué. Shakespeare's fairy plays, which had inspired fine paintings by Reynolds and Fuseli in the 1800s, continued to give artists the license to paint fairy subjects in the next century: Joseph Noël Paton, Daniel Maclise, Robert Huskisson, and numerous others achieved success with magical pictures of Ariel, Oberon, Titania, and Puck. The Pre-Raphaelite painters, whose subject matter was often drawn from myths and legends, rarely painted "the little people" themselves—yet a single fairy picture by John Everett Millais, *Ferdinand Lured by Ariel*, was much admired by subsequent painters (although the original buyer rejected the picture because the fairies were "too green"). Younger painters in the "second wave" of Pre-Raphaelitism (including E.R. Hughes, Paul Woodroffe, Margaret Tarrant, the Birmingham Group, and the Celtic Revivalists in Scotland) turned to fairy subjects more regularly—not only in gallery paintings but in a wide variety of arts and crafts. Eleanor Fortescue-Brickdale, for instance (the first woman elected to the Royal Institute of Oil Painters), not only painted lovely fairy images in a rich, Pre-Raphaelite style, but also designed fairy motifs in stained glass and book illustrations. Margaret Macdonald McIntosh, Jessie M. King, Annie French, and the other "Glasgow Girls" in Scotland from the 1880s onward created fairy imagery in metalwork, jewelry, ceramics, textiles, and even furniture design, in addition to gallery paintings, murals, and illustrated books.

Richard Dadd is the painter considered the quintessential Victorian fairy artist. He peopled his canvases with creatures drawn both from British fairy literature and the archetypes of rural fairy lore: miniaturized beings depicted in naturalistic, highly detailed settings. (Victorians like Dadd have been accused of "inventing" the idea of diminutive fairies—but fairies of *all* sizes populate the oldest of British accounts.) As a student at the Royal Academy in London, Dadd painted unremarkable works of landscape, marine, and animal subjects; he then traveled on a tour of the Middle East, after which his whole life shattered. During this trip, Dadd became so feverishly excited (as he wrote in a letter to a friend) that he doubted his own sanity … an idea with which his doctor concurred when Dadd returned to London. The painter's father took him to the countryside for a rest, on the doctor's advice. Soon after, Dadd stabbed his father to death—and then the artist fled to France, where he planned to murder the Emperor of Austria, and stabbed a total stranger instead. Arrested and brought back to England, Dadd was placed in a men-





PREVIOUS SPREAD: Right: Arthur Rackham (*Santa Claus*, 1907), one of the best turn-of-the-century book illustrators, often painted fairy subjects. Left: Edward Robert Hughes' *Midsummer Eve* (1909) was inspired by Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.
LEFT: The miniaturized fairyland of John Anster Fitzgerald's *The Fairies' Banquet* (1859) is filled with the vibrant colors and macabre symbols of opium dreams.
ABOVE: *Ferdinand Lured by Ariel* by John Everett Millais (1849-50), which was inspired by Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, displays a combination of realism and fantasy that makes it look like a dream.

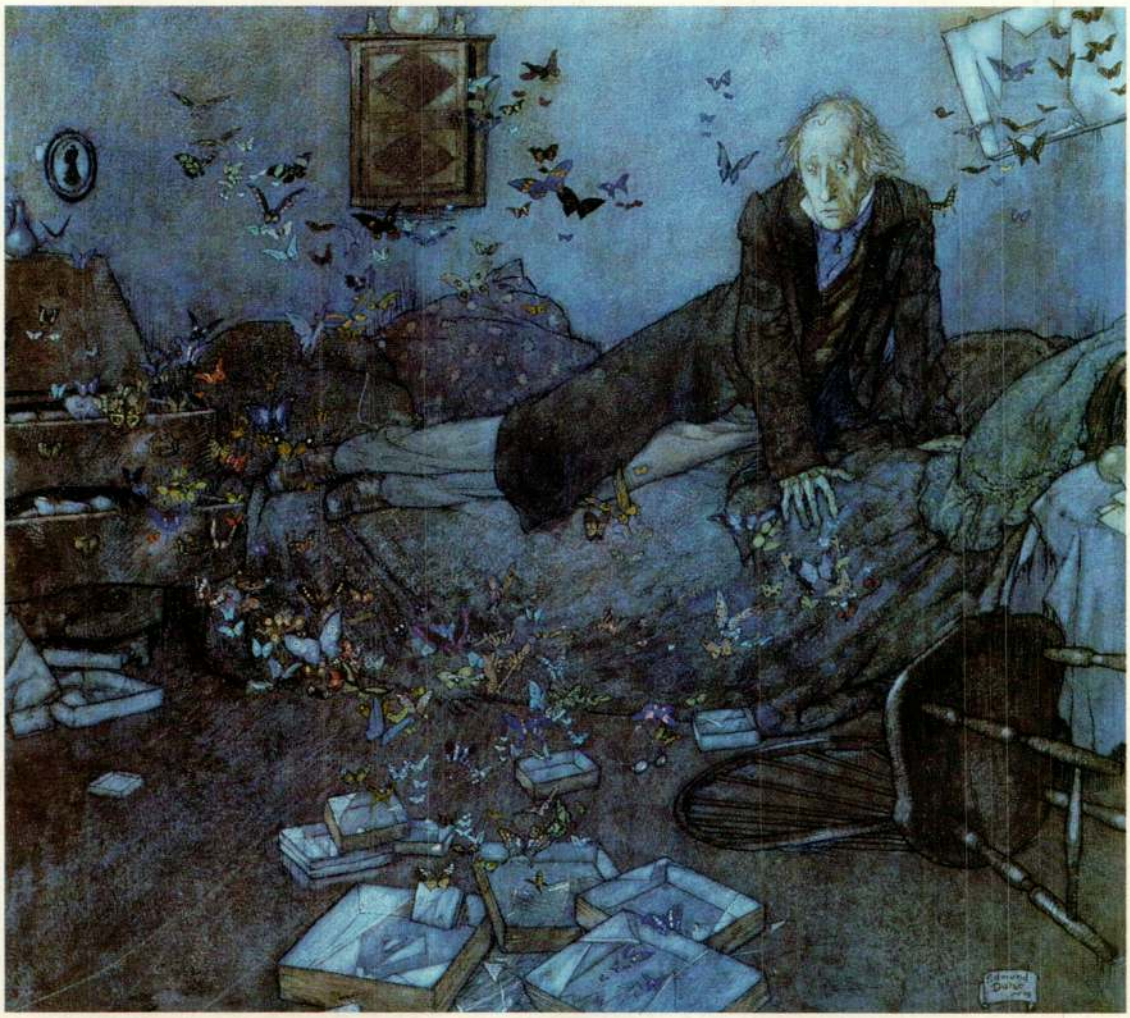


tal asylum called Bedlam. The artist was allowed his brushes and paints (by all accounts, he was usually the gentlest of men), and it was in Bedlam that he produced his gorgeously detailed fairy paintings. Best known of these is Dadd's masterwork, *The Fairy Feller's Master Stroke* (popularized by the rock group Queen in a song from the 1970s).

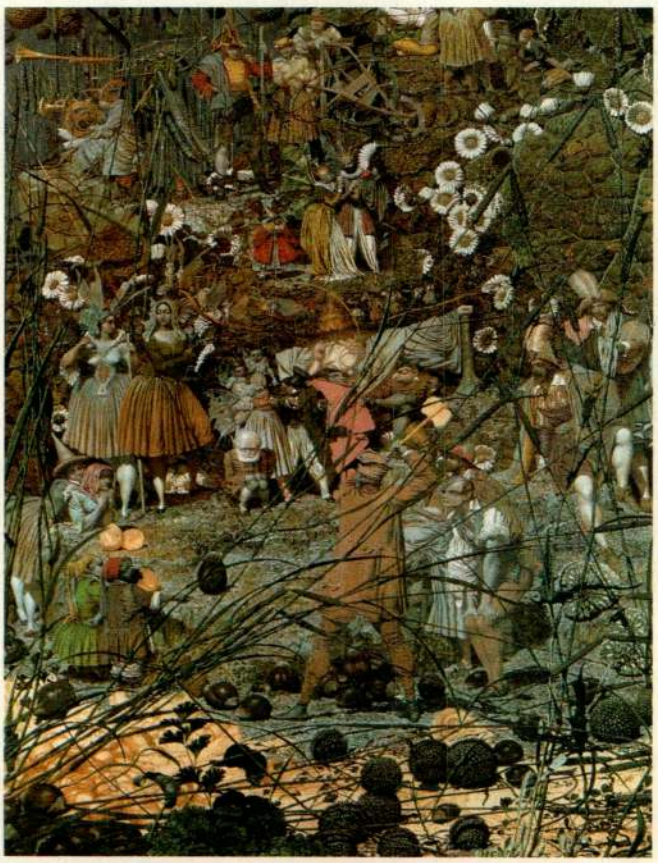
Richard ("Dickie") Doyle, like Richard Dadd, portrayed Fairyland as a miniaturized world where sprites could be found in the shadows beneath fallen leaves and behind every blade of grass. Best known for his book illustrations (such as his classic volume *In Fairyland*), Doyle also painted large fairy pictures in watercolors and oils, usually peopled with hundreds of fairies, intricately, minutely rendered. His brother Charles (the father of Arthur Conan Doyle) was also an artist who specialized in Fantasy imagery, but unlike Dickie (reported to be a "singularly sweet and noble type of English gentleman"), Charles became a severe alcoholic, eventually broke down altogether, and ended up in a mental asylum—where he created his haunting, disturbing watercolors full of magical creatures. John Anster Fitzgerald (known as "Fairy Fitzgerald"), born in London of Irish ancestry, was another painter whose artwork had a bizarre and disturbing quality—most likely due to opium smoking and the use of laudanum, an opium derivative. Regular opium use engenders dreams, fantasias, and hallucinations of richly colored intensity, both sensual and sinister—which aptly describes the fairy paintings to which Fitzgerald dedicated his life. As in a surprising number of Victorian fairy paintings, the luminous world conjured by Fitzgerald becomes sinister with a closer look, filled as it is with perverse little fairies cheerfully engaged in abusing birds, insects, mice, and other creatures. Fitzgerald's "dream pictures " are even stranger, populated by goblinesque figures proffering transparent glasses of mysterious brews, or bottles in the shape of laudanum vials. Caught halfway between dream and nightmare, these fine paintings are among Fitzgerald's best work, anticipating the images of Surrealists such as Leonora Carrington and Max Ernst.

The Golden Age of Fairy Painting is said to have ended in the 1870s … but (like all things fey) it did not die, it merely shape-shifted, and the Victorian passion for fairies found new expression in illustrated books. From the end of the 1900s through the early years of the 20th century, an extraordinary number of top illustrators were living, working, and publishing in England, including Walter Crane, Warwick Goble, Kay Nielsen, Eleanor Vere Boyle, Charles and William Heath Robinson, Emma Florence Harrison, Ida Rintoul Outh-waite, and others too numerous to list. Aided by advances in printing techniques (as well as by rising literacy and wealth within the middle class), beautiful, illustrated books enjoyed unprecedented success, popular not only with children but also with art-loving adults. Many of these volumes contained old fairy tales or magical stories by contemporary writers (Dickens, Thackeray, Macdonald, Wilde, Carroll, and Kipling to name just a few), creating a wealth of fairy imagery that remains unequaled today. The very best of the artists of this time were Arthur Rackham and Edmund Dulac, whose works went on to color the dreams of generations of children the world over. Arthur Rackham had studied art at night school while working for an insurance company; in the 1890s he began to illustrate books and magazines in London, achieving success with his paintings for *Tales from Shakespeare* and *Grimms' Fairy Tales*. Subsequent fairy books included Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill* and (most famously) Rackham's collaboration with J.M. Barrie: *Peter Pan in Kensington Garden*. Edmund Dulac, although generally known as an English artist, was raised and educated in France. A lifelong Anglophile, Dulac moved to London in 1906, where

Pictures of fairies in romantic settings were a reaction to the mechanized world of the Industrial Revolution.



FAR LEFT: *Iris*, by John Atkinson Grimshaw (1886), portrays the painter's lifelong interest in the illusory qulaities of mist and twilight. LEFT: Edmund Dulac's *The Entomologist's Dream* (1909) makes the connection between butterflies and butterfly-winged fairies painted by artists since the late 18th century. BELOW: One of the finest fairy paintings of Victorian England, Richard Dadd's *The Fairy Feller's Master Stroke* (1864) was created while the artist was in a mental hospital.



he changed his name from Edmond to Edmund and made a name for himself as the illustrator of *The Arabian Nights, The Snow Queen,* and other fine books.

All of these artists, from Dadd to Dulac, have informed and inspired painters of magical pictures right down to this day—particularly artists in the Fantasy genre, as well as writers of Fantasy fiction. (John Crowley's *Little, Big,* Sylvia Townsend Warner's *Kingdoms of Elfin,* and Neil Gaiman's *Stardust* are just three of the many books clearly influenced by such imagery.) Modern painters as diverse as Brian Froud, Alan Lee, James Christensen, Gennady Spirin, Lizbeth Zwerger, and Charles Vess are all working, in their different ways, to update the Golden Age tradition, as are sculptor Wendy Froud, photographer Suza Scalora, and a host of others. In 1997, the Royal Academy in London and the University of Iowa Museum of Art joined forces to curate a major show of Victorian Fairy Painting, prompting an overdue reappraisal of these unusual works by scholars and critics. The catalog from that show has been published under the title *Victorian Fairy Painting* (text by Jeremy Maas et al.)—an excellent source for viewing a broader range of fairy paintings than these magazine pages will allow. Also recommended: *Fairies in Victorian Paintings* by Christopher Wood; *The Faeryland Companion* by Beatrice Phillipotts; *Glasgow Girls* by Jude Burkhauser; and *The Last Romantics: The Romantic Tradition in British Art* edited by John Christian. The poet William Butler Yeats, a great champion of fairies, once wrote that a man can't lift his hand without influencing and being influenced by hordes of them. This seems especially true of the Golden Age painters, and the result is pure magic.

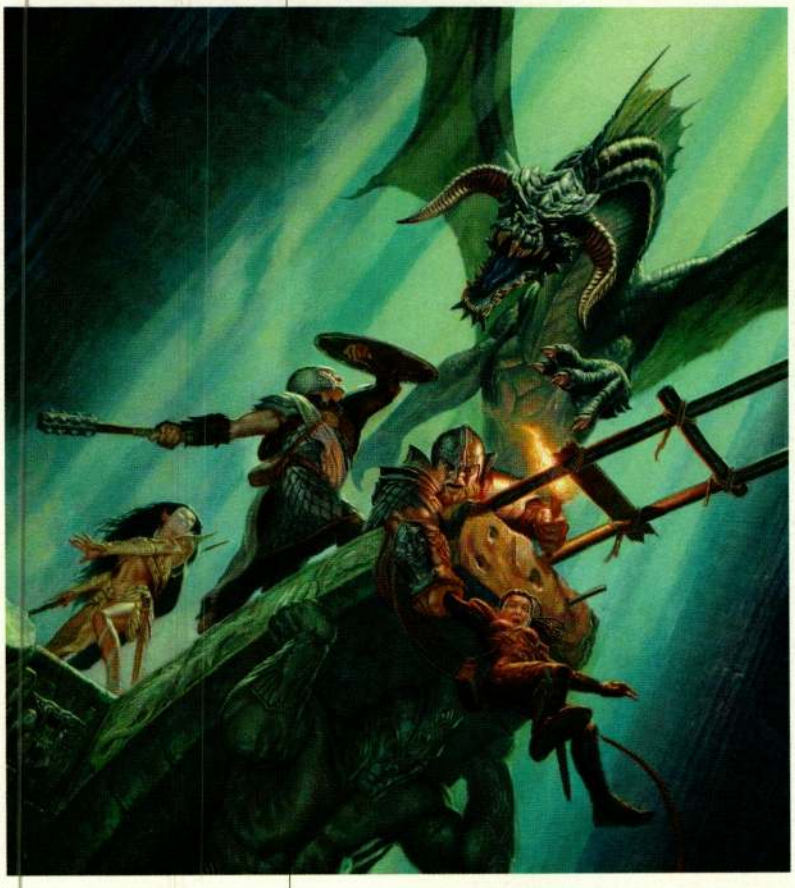
By Eric T. Baker

Ragnar takes on the Sark Amen in the new PC game *Rune*.

In *Rune*, the new PC game created by Human Head Studios Inc., players assume the role of Ragnar the Viking, a bold, young warrior who is charged with defending the Odin stones from destruction. Done from a third-person perspective, *Rune* mixes Norse mythology and high Fantasy as Ragnar uses a gaggle of weapons to fight fantastic creature. The action travels through a series of well-rendered settings both above and below the mountain to the final confrontation with the Sark Amen, the masters of the underworld, who are trying to bring about Ragnorok, the end of the world.

Getting Ragnar through his quest involves a lot of exploring as well as combat. Levels include a Viking town, the caverns of the Dwarves, and a city in the mountains. The multiplayer game includes several levels just for death match play. Ragnar is quite the jumper and a lot of his quest involves jumping from one peril to another. In combat, too, many blows are more effective if combined with a well-timed jump.

There are 25 levels in the single-player game. Ragnar eventually gets access to 15 weapons including battle axes, throwing axes, short swords, two-handed swords, warhammers, and magical weapons. In addition, Ragnar gains Rune powers that are keyed to the weapon he is currently wielding. Just because he gains the two-handed sword is no reason to toss the short sword. He may need its power.



Forge of Fury *(above) is a new D&D adventure module that familiarizes players and Dungeon Masters with Third Edition rules.*

The game's enemies include dark Vikings, underground creatures, man-eating fish, goblins, and a mysterious super race. Weapons can be thrown, but mostly these menaces are met face to face, blow to blow. Learning to use Ragnar's shield is a good idea, but because of the time the game takes to cycle from the blocking animation to the attacking one, against many opponents, defense has to be set aside in favor of all-out attack. The engine does let Ragnar take weapons from his defeated opponents and also lets him hack his way through some of the scenery.

The only flaw in *Rune* may not bother most gamers, but at its heart, *Rune* is an over-the-shoulder perspective fighting game. Take away the throwing switches and jumping from column to column, and it is basically *Tekken*. The adventure and story elements are nice, but if the player doesn't learn to kick ass, then he'll never get to those adventures and stories. So, combat is plentiful, and it is up close, and neither its moves nor its animations are as varied as they would be in a straight fighting game. Most players will be having enough fun that it won't matter to them that Ragnar can't do a flying leg kick with shoulder-roll counter, but others will see a greatly missed opportunity. Either way *Rune* is an enthralling ride through a classic background.



Cities are magic for role-playing games. Right after people started designing dungeons to game in, they began designing cities. Of course they approached them the same way they approached dungeons. Big grids of rooms, each with its nonplayer characters (NPCs) and monsters. And sometimes the cities were played in like dungeons, with the characters going from house to house, seeing what there was to find. Things have come a ways from that time, but echoes of it still persist. Take the Freiburg

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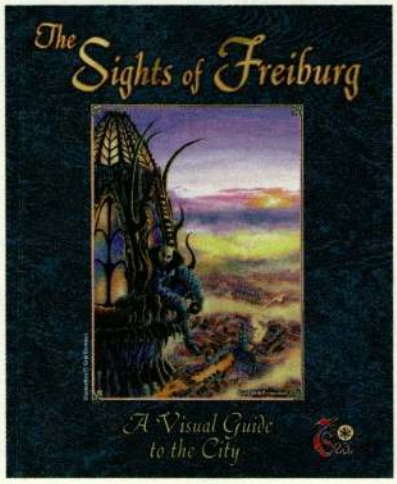
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City Boxed Set for Alderac Entertainment Group's *7th Sea* background. It is an excellent example of state-of-the-art city design for the RPG.

The Freiburg boxed set includes three books and two maps. One of the books is "Welcome to Freiburg," a 48-page guide to the city that is meant for the player characters to read. The other two books, "The Sights of Freiburg" and "The City of Freiburg," are for the Game Master (GM). "The Sights" has been in every city set since the Judge's Guild published *The City State of the World Emperor* in the early 1980s. It is a description of the contents in all the houses on the map of the city. The map is broken down into a grid, and each grid square has its own two-page spread in the book. The spread has a blowup of the square in which the buildings are numbered. The numbers key to the descriptions. Some are single lines, and some are multiple paragraphs that include statistics for the NPCs. Some descriptions are also cross-referenced to descriptions in other parts of the book that relate to them.



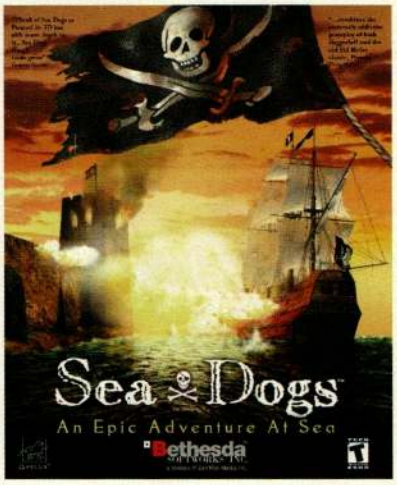
"The City of Freiburg" is the history of the city. It contains descriptions of the major NPCs, a new swordsman's school, more backgrounds and advantages, statistics for all the NPC types that the characters will encounter, and a complete campaign to run the characters through set in the city itself.

The background of Freiburg is summed up in its motto, "No questions." The prince who rules it sees the city as an experiment in laissez-faire government. It effectively has no laws beyond those of property, and this status as an open port has made it the largest city in Théah. The lure of duty-free trade makes the city's docks bustle and brings more refugees every day.

The campaign introduces the characters to the city itself, and puts them in the uppermost circles of Freiburg society. And then it briefly puts them in the uppermost circles of the whole country's society before putting them right at the center of a tremendous battle for the fate of the city itself. It is an interesting series of scenarios. The only false step seems to be that having given the characters wealth beyond the dreams of avarice, the scenario then asks the GM to make the players relinquish it. Lots of good hints are given for how to do this, but even so, in my group it would be a hard sell. *7th Sea* is a swashbuckling background that can be set at sea.



Sea Dogs, the new computer RPG from Bethesda Software, is swashbuckling only at sea. Players take the role of a young captain looking to make a name in the 18th-century Caribbean, the golden age of piracy. *SD* has an RPG feel, but it also contains big doses of naval combat and hand-to-hand fighting. It is open-ended and character-dependent, meaning that if five different people sat down to play, they would each take a very different path to the game's end. Players, for example, can give their character's allegiance to one of four Nations, but they can also change that allegiance during the course of play.



This is the sort of game play for which Bethesda is famous. Their computer RPG, *Daggerfall*, is perhaps the most open and unbounded RPG ever published. In *SD*, the ability of the player's character to change sides and choose his own order in completing the quests is possible because there is always more than one way around any challenge. If a certain contact cannot be made in a friendly manner because, for instance, the character has been fighting with that country's navy, then there is always bribery to make the encounter happen.

The game begins with some rousing cut scenes, and then the player is given control of the character in a small town, with command of a small ship. Towns serve as focal points in the game, allowing the character to repair, re-supply, and upgrade his ship, hire new crew members, look for work, or pick up quests.

Sea Dogs provides a series of quests and missions that will keep players headed toward an overall final objective. Each quest features a different story line, ending, and mission. Which quests a player takes will depend on how he or she approaches the game. Some players will want to sail the seas as a buccaneer or pirate, looking for ships to fight and loot; other players will want to gear themselves toward trade, using rumors and quests to chase opportunities for big profits that exist on the various islands. As your character gains wealth or gets better at combat, increasing the relevant skills, he can obtain additional ships. For allied ships, the player decides which NPC captains to hire, and then they run their own ships, taking orders from the player's character.

Combat takes place either in third person, first person, or tactical view. Players can switch between the three as they like. There are seven classes of ships covering about 40 types of vessels. Victory doesn't come from just packing these craft with cannon and crew and buying up the character's fighting skills. Ships maneuver using a sailing model that awards victory to the captain who can get his ship into firing position the fastest. Once the shooting starts, changing to first-person mode lets the player use a targeting cursor to manually direct different types of shot at enemy sails, rigging, and crew. There is also a spyglass function that allows the player to zoom in on an opposing vessel or fort, but looking at the enemy can give actual, useful information. And there isn't a better mode to watch cannon punching holes in the enemy.

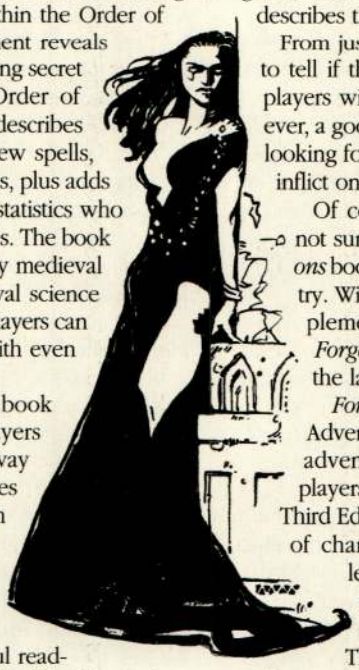
Once ships close with one another, then boarding can take place. The character needs grappling skill to get the ships together, and then boarding skill to fight once he's on board. In fact, the entire boarding action is determined by a duel between the two captains. And it is here that *SD* suffers the same problem that *Rune* does, although not as severely because players spend a lot less time dueling in *SD* than they do in *Rune*. There are a limited number of moves in *SD* and a limited number of animations to display them. On the other hand, defense is actually more common and more useful in *SD* than in *Rune*.

While not perfect, *Sea Dogs* is one of those huge RPGs that lets you game for days as you constantly find new things and explore new facets of the world and the game's mechanics. There is even some replay value to the game, which is amazing considering how long it will take you to complete it just once.

The best pen-and-paper RPG for people who want to play magic users remains *Ars Magica* from Atlas Games. The latest supplement for the game is *The Mysteries: The Mind of the Magus*. *AM* is set in Mythic Europe which means that is Medieval Europe not as

it was, but as the people living in it believed it to be. Thus, all the supplements for *AM* are as much history as they are invention. *Mysteries* gathers real-world magic traditions from the academies of Greece, the cults of Rome, the scriptoriums of Christian monks, the minarets of Islamic sages, and the stone circles of the ancients. Specifically, the book has chapters on Alchemy, Astrology, Seers (dream magic), Theurgy (religious magic), and Daemonology.

On the made-up side, *Mysteries* takes players deeper in the minds of magi than ever before by revealing a new level of intrigue and magic at work within the Order of Hermes. This supplement reveals and gives rules for playing secret societies within the Order of Hermes. Each chapter describes a society, then adds new spells, lab activities, and virtues, plus adds NPC wizards with full statistics who are a part of the societies. The book tries to explain not only medieval magic, but also medieval science and mysticism so that players can play their characters with even greater depth.



Mysteries is a good book both for long-time players who are looking for a way to shake up the routines they've fallen into with the game, and for new players who want a campaign with an extra layer of depth. And it makes wonderful reading for a Game Master looking for cool new NPCs.

Every day the effects of the Open Gaming License grow. Wizards of the Coast's attempt to grow the hobby by letting everyone publish supplements for its D20 gaming system is seeing a tremendous amount of material being published. And not all of it is by small and mid-level companies trying to generate profits to finance their own lines. White Wolf, the No. 2 gaming company in the hobby, whose signature game, *Vampire the Masquerade*, is the second best selling RPG to Wizard's *Dungeons & Dragons*, has put out *The Creature Collection*, a fully illustrated 224-page hardcover supplement containing over two hundred Fantasy monsters. WW released *CC* even before Wizard's own *Monster Manual* was on the shelves.

While it is currently impossible to say how D20 supplements are selling, rumor has it that WW sold out a run of 50,000 copies of the *CC*; that is more than 10 times as many books Atlas will have printed for *Mysteries*. At $25 retail, *CC* sells to distributors at $10 each. That means WW, if the rumors are true, pulled in a cool $500,000 in gross receipts. Some of those copies went to the bookstores and might come back as returns after Christmas, but numbers like that explain why game companies are very excited about the Open License.

The Creature Collection is the first book in a series of supplements that White Wolf is putting out under the *Sword and Sorcery* brand name for a new Fantasy world of its creation, called the Scarred Lands, that will use the D20 mechanics. The book contains creatures such as the horrible Wrack Dragons, the intoxicating Brewer Gnomes, the colossal Mithril Golem, and the tiny Bottle Imp. Every creature has a full writeup and a picture. The pictures are uneven at best. Some are very good, and some are really bad—which describes the writeups as well.

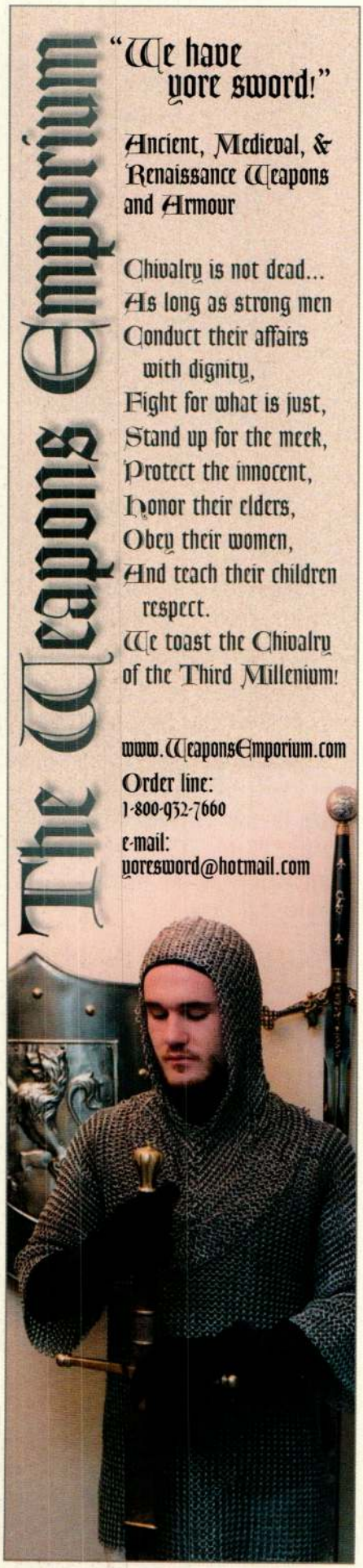
From just this one book, it is impossible to tell if the Scarred Lands is a place that players will want to adventure. It is, however, a good resource for Dungeon Masters looking for new and unexpected critters to inflict on their players.

Of course Wizards of the Coast has not surrendered the *Dungeons & Dragons* book market to the rest of the industry. Wizard's is publishing its own supplements and adventure modules. *Forge of Fury* is the latest example of the latter.

Forge is the second adventure in the Adventure Path series. These are eight adventures designed to familiarize players and Dungeon Masters with the Third Edition rules while bringing a party of characters from first through 20th level. The module has callouts in the text to remind the Dungeon Master of the workings of new Third Edition rules such as grappling or swimming in armor. It is written for four third-level characters. The dungeon has to be beefed up (easier to do) or toned down (harder to do) if the characters aren't an exact match for that power level. The adventure takes place inside a single dungeon with several levels. The maps, as seems to be standard for Third Edition adventures no matter who publishes them, are printed on the inside of the front and back covers.

The biggest thing to be aware of for a Dungeon Master running this adventure is that there is no nearby town for use as a base of operations. Players who get their characters in trouble don't have a safe place to retire to. Fortunately, combat is not required in every encounter. Several points in the dungeon can be solved by negotiations and role-playing. Not that negotiating is necessarily any safer than fighting, but the variety is nice. The final encounter in the dungeon came as a surprise to me because of the relatively low level of the characters, but by the time they have gotten to it, they should be able to survive it.

While not a genre-breaking, innovative take on the dungeon-crawling genre, *Forge of Fury* is a fun adventure with some interesting characters and monsters. It is a good primer on the Third Edition rules, and a great way to kill more than one evening. ❧



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REDMOND

Continued from page 36

wind stopped abruptly, and a surreal fuzziness filled the screening room.

"Mikey!" Redmond's voice cracked like a pubescent teenager's.

The projector had stopped, though the screen still glowed like a window onto a scarlet landscape. Michael stood beside the motionless reel of film, but he could not move. Neither did the men seated in the wooden folding chairs. It was as if time had stopped, as if the apparatus projecting their lives had frozen on a single frame.

Except for Redmond, who stormed back and forth. "What the hell is going on here?" He seemed to know the answer, but could think of nothing else to say, no other way to pretend having command of the situation.

Will vengeance suffice? It wasn't a voice. It wasn't even words. Michael heard Japanese, but the other men in the room seemed to understand as well.

Redmond made a strange sound between a gulp and a scream. "What do you mean? I did everything I promised!" He paused, as if spinning through his memories of everything Michael had told him. "I kept my honor!" Michael could not react, or move, or say anything to help him.

You are a man fundamentally without honor. Writing promises on paper to ensure that you will keep them, profiting by the suffering of others. These five will receive enough blood for their tastes, and my own. Such men deserve to die as common criminals.

The men sat frozen in their seats, but Michael watched as their heads slumped, one by one. He thought he heard a squelching sound and then a haunting series of screams echoing in the air. Michael felt like a helpless bystander, watching and wondering if he himself might be next.

Redmond, you shall have an opportunity to regain your honor.

The crimson covering the screen thinned and began to drip away, revealing a new image of a freckled man dressed in gaudy Japanese robes. He sat cross-legged and holding a samurai sword against his bared abdomen.

"You can't do this!" In the room, Redmond swatted at his robe as if trying to knock away the touch of a phantom sword. The image of Redmond on the screen sat contemplating the blade about to pierce his stomach. "We had a contract!"

I made no contract with you.

"Yes! You signed it, and I fulfilled my part, just like I promised. I didn't cheat you. Look, I'm sorry your father died, but I had nothing to do with that. I can't help it if he spilled your ashes on the dock. Please!"

Michael tried to call out to Redmond, but his vocal cords had snapped like so many spiderwebs.

You have me confused with my son, fool. He is content with the bargain he made and with the price it cost him. I am the one who demands vengeance.

On the screen, another robed figure stepped behind the image of Redmond, holding a second sword. Takahashi's old mother, taking up her position to be Redmond's kaishaku.

I am the one who suffered most. My sons both gone, my husband. I am left with nothing, and I demand retribution.

"You can't be a ghost. You're not even dead!"

On the screen, the old woman smiled and raised the sword. *Why must a body be dead for the spirit to roam free?*

She nodded to the image of Redmond in the film. He looked into space as if in a trance, then drove the sword into his belly.

The film broke, and the projector bulb burst at the same time. Michael snapped off the machine, and as silence returned he heard a brief remnant of a scream disappearing into time. It sounded like Redmond's voice.

He fumbled for the main light switches. Redmond was sprawled on the floor clutching his stomach. The other five men were slumped in their folding wooden chairs, arms dangling at their sides.

Michael touched Redmond. The director's skin was cold and rigid. He checked the businessmen, and they were dead as well. He could find no blood anywhere. The sticky redness had vanished even from the film and the projector.

The shock crept up on him, paralyzing him. Why had the old woman's ghost spared him? He himself had arranged for her son's death. But Michael had not deviated from the old woman's concept of honor, as Redmond had. That did not mean Michael was an honorable man. He still had to deal with his own shame.

Shame. The traditions of Michael Kendai's culture had taught him how to cope with shame. Was the old woman's ghost expecting him to follow the traditional course? Redmond had the excuse of ignorance; Michael did not. Would she come after him if he did not kill himself to atone for his crime? But he was too much of a coward.

He rewound the film before he removed the reel. He vowed that no one else would ever watch *Scarlet Sword*. He would destroy it. He knew where Redmond kept prints of his other films, and he mounted the ballerina reel onto the projector. The police would be very confused.

Michael would be long gone before anyone discovered the bodies and turned their eyes toward a convenient Japanese scapegoat. Michael could cover his tracks. He was good at that.

New York looked better and better.

Fighting down the feelings of fear and shame within him, Michael left the screening room. He tried to keep from running as he fled into the street. ❧



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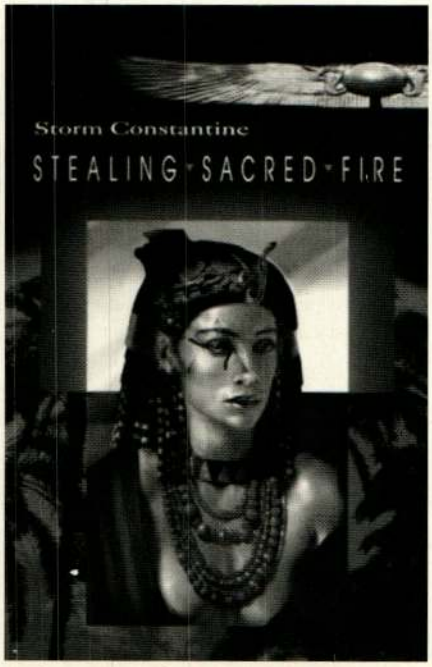
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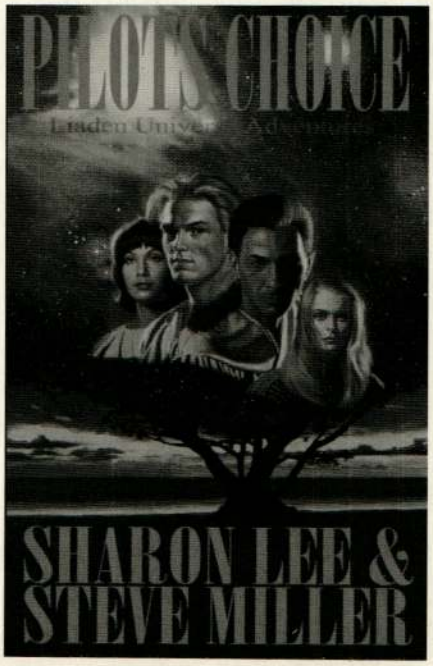
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MESSAGES

Continued from page 41

and walks around him. "I'm going back up to the house."

"Don't you want to hear it?"

He waves a hand behind his back. "I told you, I never heard anything."

The dock shakes as TJ runs to catch up to him. "Maybe you weren't listening."

Ben stops and TJ stands next to him and he still has not picked up his cap. Ben would rather not see the pale skin on his head. It stands out in the dark.

"I was listening, Teege."

TJ holds out the bottle. "You open it, and this time listen."

Ben points at it. "You give that to me and I'll break it."

TJ shoves the bottle at Ben's chest. "Come on, Ben."

Ben steps back, brushing the bottle away with his hands. "No! If you're going to make an idiot out of yourself with that bottle, I'll leave you alone."

"I just want to know if everything will be all right, Ben."

"So do I!" Ben yells. He feels frustrated like he cannot reach something and cannot bring it back. "Then why do you keep playing with that damn bottle!"

TJ doesn't say anything for a moment. Ben is so angry he breathes hard.

"It helps me, Ben." TJ shoves the bottle at him again.

Ben pushes it away and walks.

TJ grabs his arm. "You can send a message."

Ben shakes away TJ's firm grip. "Stop it!"

Ben fidgets, feet not sure where to point. He walks to TJ's fallen cap and picks it up and puts it back on his friend's head.

"Keep your cap on, Teege."

Ben goes to the end of the dock and stares at a black starless sky and the dark lake.

TJ nudges the bottle against Ben's arm. "Open it."

Ben looks at the bottle. "You're really asking for it."

TJ keeps pushing.

"Oh, Teege!" Ben grabs the bottle and feels the grooves of the bottle cap in between his thumb and index finger. "I can't believe this."

He rubs the bottle cap for a moment and then grabs the cap firmly and twists.

Warm air tickles his chin. The voice is deep like the sound of someone blowing at a pop-bottle rim. Ben thinks he hears: "... Darkness ... You ... Light." Nothing else is clear.

TJ speaks close to his ear. "See? Did you hear it?"

Ben nods his head and doesn't look at him. "Yeah."

TJ pokes him with a finger. "Say something."

Ben puts the rim to his lips and says, "Go take someone else away."

He seals the bottle tight and throws his message into the dark. ❧

OTHERLING

Continued from page 47

time the travelers came by, whose eyes filled with tears to hear the voice of the whistle, so sad, so pure. What had she done to him? What had she done to them both?

"Come with me. I want to show you something."

He had no questions as they walked together under dark skies, up the hill to the place of the stones. She asked his name; he said, Sam.

"Were you at the last Singing?" she asked him.

He nodded and said nothing. At the old water trough they halted.

"Wash your face," Bard told him. *Washed clean, the two of them; naked and clean.*

The young man, Sam, looked at her a moment, eyes wide. His features were daubed with spiral and link, dot and line. His hair stood in rows of hedgehog prickles, waxed honey-dark. He bent to the water and splashed his face, washing the markings away. The water clouded.

"Wait," said Bard.

The water cleared. The sun pierced the cloud for one bright moment.

"Now look," she said.

The image was murky; specks of colored clay floated across his mirrored features. But it was plain enough. He glanced up at her.

"I did wrong," Bard said. "He is your brother. I saved you, because—because—no matter. Now all is awry because of what I did not do." In its way, it was an apology.

There were no desperate denials, no protests.

"Can I see him?" Sam asked. "I'd like to see him first." It was as if he knew. Clouds rolled across, heavy with rain. The sky growled like a wild beast.

"Come, then," said Bard.

Halli was by the watchstone, hands outstretched, eyes shut in pose of meditation. Often before a storm she had found him thus; the soughing of the wind, the uneasy movement of trees, the air's strange pungent smell excited him. At such times of danger, he said, who knew what powerful voices might speak from the stones?

They stood by the hollow's rim, Bard and the young man Sam. Under the dark folds of her long cloak, her fingers touched cold iron.

"He is your brother," she said again, and Halli's blue eyes snapped open. No need for explanations. The two stood frozen, one in astonished wonderment, the other in sudden furious realization. There was a moment of silence. Then Halli drew ragged breath.

"You saved him!" he whispered, accusatory, furious. "No wonder I was never good enough, no wonder I could not hear them! You saved the Otherling! Why? Why?"

Because of love, Bard answered, but not aloud. *I did wrong, and now he must die.*

"Brother, well met indeed!" Sam's dimpled smile was generous. Below the bizarre spiked hair his blue eyes spoke a bright welcome. He took a step forward, hand outstretched in friendship. Now she was behind him. Halli's anguished eyes met hers over his twin's shoulder, their message starkly clear. *Do it now. Do what you could not do before. Make it right again.* Perhaps it was her own Otherling who spoke these words; the shadow within. She drew out the knife. She saw the dimple appear on Halli's cheek, the curve of his mouth as he watched her. Sam went very still. He did not turn. Bard raised her hand.

A great blade speared down from above; there was a thunderous crack like the very ending of the world, and a sudden rending. It was not her own small weapon that set the earth shuddering, and came like a wave through the damp air, hurtling her head over heels to land sprawling, gasping, face down in wet grass with her two hands clutching for purchase and her ears ringing, deafened by the immense voice that had spoken. Her heart thudded; her head swam. Slowly she got to her knees. The knife lay on the ground by her feet, its blade clean as a new-washed babe. She looked up. The watchstone was split asunder, its monumental form chiselled in two pieces by the force of the blast. One part still stood tall, reaching its lichen-crusted head to touch the storm-tossed sky. The other part lay prone now, like shadow given substance: dark testament to the sky's ferocity. This slab would never be lifted, not should all the Folk of the island come with ropes and oxen. It was grave and cradle; ending and beginning. After all, she had not had to choose. The ancestors had spoken, and the choice was made.

"You're weeping," she said. "Bard does not weep."

"How can I not weep?" he asked her. "He was my brother."

"Come, Halli," said Bard gently. "There is no more to be done here. And it's starting to rain"' She unfastened her cloak and reached to put it around his shoulders.

He stared at her, face ashen with the shock of finding, and losing, and finding again. "I have much to learn," he whispered, and she saw that he had recognised her meaning. "So much.'

Bard nodded. "I am not so old yet that I cannot teach you what you must know. Already you are rich in understanding. Already you hear the Songs and tell them, unaware. He will help you. His fingers know the harp, his lips the pipe. The heart that beats new wisdom into the Songs belongs now to the two of you."

He bowed his head, looking toward the gentle hollow, now hidden beneath the huge slab of stone. Rain fell like tears on its fresh-hewn surface, making a pattern of spiral and curve, dot and line.

"Best put the hood up," she said, "until I attend to that hair of yours. No student of mine goes unshaven. Now come. There's work to be done." ❧

EDITORIAL

Continued from page 6

Great in history books and memorize the facts and repeat them on a test. However, if I read *The Persian Boy*, I find I develop a great attachment to Alexander and a deep curiosity about his time and accomplishments that makes me want to know more about him. For that matter, what about the Great Depression? Which makes it more real, a history book full of facts and figures, or the Joad family, struggling to survive and keep their humanity in the face of disaster? In the end, this leads to a discussion of the place of literature in our world. Do we read and write books for entertainment only? Or do we read and write books to learn, to travel to different places, become different people, to see life through new eyes? I know which side of this question I come down on.

As to whether John Steinbeck or Weis and Hickman had a "harder" job of creating, look at it this way: Which is "harder" to write—a Petrarchan sonnet, with its strict scansion and rhyme scheme, or free verse, where you can put in anything you want at any point? I believe that it is far easier to create a story out of whole cloth, especially a Fantasy story in which there are simply no limits other than those imposed by you, the author, on what might happen or what powers the characters might have. But to create life and sorrow and tragedy and triumph within the rather strict framework of the world we live in is a far harder task. This is not to say that all Fantasy is "easy" and without merit. Obviously, if I believed that, I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing. Certainly there are great works of Fantasy that illumine the human condition and change our view of the world we live in. I just don't happen to think that Dragonlance is one of them.

When you do get to college, I suspect you'll find a world and a wealth of ideas that you can't even imagine right now—but I'm sorry to say that, judging from my own college experience, your professors will not always allow you your own personal interpretation of texts.

Finally, about the daunting task of getting published—here or in any magazine. Yes, the odds are against you. For every story or article published by editors, thousands go back to their authors. But to say that there's no point in trying since it's so hard to do—well, all I can say is, look at the Joads. Did they give up in the face of overwhelming odds? (Sorry—I couldn't help it.) A good story will get published. All submissions are read and considered with equal weight. A good story by a newcomer has absolutely the same odds as a good story by a long-time professional. I, and all the other editors out there, are constantly looking for new talent, and nothing makes us happier than to find it.

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BOOKS

Continued from page 31

Beagle heroine, Hail Rosamer possesses a steely will, a stubborn disposition, and a native talent for drawing. Born into a family of wool merchants in the Lidian Empire (a conglomeration of states adjacent to Austria), Hail finds her destiny separating from her family's when she is apprenticed to master artist Madame Carriera, resident in the city of Aravis. Hail has barely begun to learn her future trade amid her fellow apprentices (all keenly limned) when she gets swept up in the political machinations revolving around a literally resurrected king, whose legendary anticipated return forms the basis for the proverbial expression alluded to in the title.

The era of our tale, it appears from context, is somewhere around the 16th century: single-shot pistols are known, but swords play a greater part in warfare. More important, alchemy works. By certain rituals, an evil sorceress named Dalet manages to bring back from the dead the famous King Julian and his loyal retainer Istvan, hoping to use them as figureheads to usurp the weak current king. Through her studies of King Julian's court artist, Maspero, Hail finds she has something to contribute to the struggle. In the space of a few months her life will be totally remolded, much as she herself has learned to melt and cast bronze.

Narrated from the vantage of Hail's old age, this tale mixes art, warfare, love, duty, and magic in a charming blend. Hail's sturdy voice is compounded of naivete, experience, optimism and despair, and Stevermer never falters in maintaining this seasoned tone. Additionally, Stevermer's choice to place Hail alternately in the middle of events and sometimes on the periphery serves to create a more believable tale than one where the protagonist always happens miraculously to land right in the thick of things.

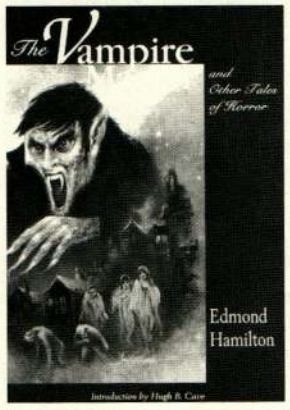
Witty, wise, and true to her passions, the common-born Hail Rosamer turns out to be more alluring than any bubble-brained princess.

Shadows Bend *by David Barbour and Richard Raleigh; Ace Books, NYC; trade paper; 311 pp.; $13.00*

Stories featuring historical personages have become something of a vogue in the field of late. I myself have committed more than a few. At best, they honor the memory of the famous people involved; at worst, they simply trade on the shoddy coinage of celebrity.

I'm pleased to report that *Shadows Bend* belongs in the superior category. It does justice to two complex figures much beloved by genre readers, and creates an adventure suitable to their temperaments and artistic legacies.

In the year 1935, H.P. Lovecraft comes into possession of a strange Artifact that seems to validate his heretofore-deemed-fictional Cthuhu Mythos. Pursued by menacing supernatural beings, he travels across country for help to one of the only people who might believe him: Robert E. Howard. Together, the *Weird Tales* authors soon leave Texas behind for the California home of a third man, Clark Ashton Smith, who holds a copy of the *Necronomicon* that might aid them. Along the way they pick up a beautiful but tawdry damsel in distress named Glory McKenna, whose fate seems impossibly linked to theirs. Eventually reaching the dapper Smith's house after many horrifying incidents, they learn that their ultimate destination is a patch of New Mexican wilderness named Shadows Bend.



There, the trio of Lovecraft, Howard, and McKenna will struggle to save the globe from—what else?—an unspeakable horror.

Authors Barbour and Raleigh manage to recreate the flavors of Lovecraft's and Howard's best work without being either too slavish or too revisionary. Although Howard and Lovecraft are of necessity simplified as individuals—HPL effete and wordy, REH barbaric and terse—they manage to emerge as creations of some depth, each man doing things that surprise both us and themselves. Smith, too, comes across as a breathing human being true to his known work and biography. And although a few scenes—such as the attack of the Night Gaunts at the Las Vegas home of Glory's sister—seem stereotypical, the climactic passages are truly eldritch.

Reading this book, I was reminded of another set of doomed literary men: the Beats. To picture Howard as Jack Kerouac, Lovecraft as William Burroughs, and Smith as Neal Cassady lends the weirdest dimension of all to this novel!

The Life of Sir Aglovale de Galis *by Clemence Housman; Green Knight Publishing, CA; trade paper; 319 pp.; $14.95*

Doug Anderson is the kind of scholar who retains a lively fan's love for the material at hand. We should have more like him. In his Introduction to this long-lost Arthurian novel—receiving its first U.S. publication ever in this edition—Anderson deftly gives us a biography of the author (talented sister of the more widely known A.E. and Laurence Housman), critiques and praises the novel, and sets this small revived masterpiece from 1905 firmly in its historical and literary context, all within a neat six pages.

Sir Aglovale, one of the sons of King Pellinore, is from childhood a dastard and rene-

gade, ruled by dark impulses he cannot master. Treachery and cruelty come easily to him, blighting his fortunes at the Round Table. At the same time he occasionally rises to heroic or redemptive deeds that inspire camaraderie among his peers. And as his manservant, the much-suffering Brose, offers, "Never have I heard him complain." This episodic novel, full of war, feuds, and courtship, serves as an intense character study of a bipolar man, chronicling his marvelous and cowardly exploits from birth to death.

Housman's style is archaic, but not impenetrable. I was reminded of the William Morris fantasies revived three decades ago by Ballantine. She manages perfectly to evoke the doomed Celtic ambience of King Arthur's realm, its mix of barbarism and Christianity, high ideals and low deceits. And her fantastic elements—ghosts, the Holy Grail—shine forth well amidst the titanic fight scenes. All in all, a rousing trip back to Camelot.

Contact Green Knight Publishing at either www.greenknight. com or 900 Murmansk Street, Suite 5, Oakland, CA 94607.

The Vampire Master and Other Tales of Horror *by Edmond Hamilton; Haffner Press, MI; hardcover; 345 pp.; $32.00*

Known primarily today as a writer of Science Fiction, Edmond Hamilton (1904-1977) possessed the pulp-trained ability to work capably in many genres. Haffner Press has here gathered up nine of Hamilton's spookier tales, and the result is a night's worth of lively, old-fashioned, shivery reading well worth your investment. (Haffner Press books are all compiled with craft and dedication, producing handsome, collectible volumes.)

As befits the rationalistic side of Hamilton, these tales are all rather straightforward almost to the point of bluntness. No Lovecraftian atmospherics here, no ornate Clark Ashton Smith language. In this fashion, Hamilton can be seen as a forerunner of a kind of streamlined Horror that was to burgeon during the second half of the 20th century.

Nonetheless, a crisply arranged tale like "Dead Legs"—in which a mobster engineers a horrifying transplant that backfires—still conveys its full share of grim and gruesome thrills. The titular novella, a little slow to get going, finally takes off in a macabre spectacle of beheadings and stakings. A linked story, "The House of the Evil Eye," featuring the same protagonist, psychic detective Dr. John Dale, is more compact, but less eerie. And even the rationalized tales like "The Earth Dwellers" and "Beasts That Once Were Men" sustain their shocks without supernatural intervention.

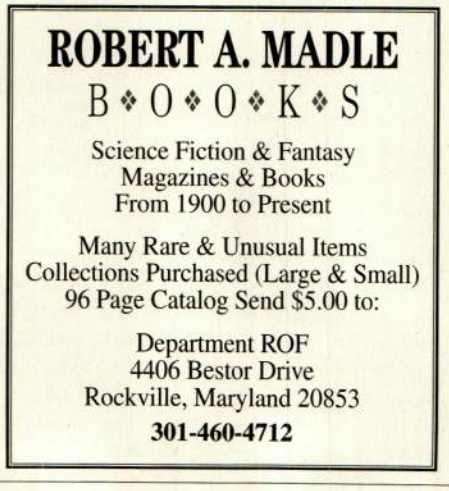
Hamilton was the kind of all-round solid writer seldom seen these days, and it's a pleasure to have these gems brought back to light.

Contact Haffner Press at either www.rust.net/~haffner/ or 5005 Crooks Road, Suite 35, Royal Oak, MI 48073.

Paul Di Filippo

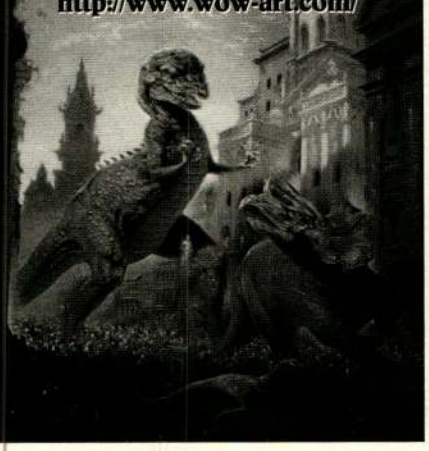








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contributors

TERRI WINDLING has been a guiding force in the development of Fantasy literature for two decades, winning six World Fantasy Awards for this work. As an editor, she has created 25 anthologies, many of them in partnership with Ellen Datlow, including the *Year's Best Fantasy and Horror* annual volumes. She is also an editorial consultant for Tor Books in New York. As a writer, she has published *A Midsummer's Night Faery Tale, The Raven Queen, The Wood Wife* (winner of the Mythopoeic Award), and other books. As an artist, her paintings on folklore themes have been exhibited at museums and galleries across America and England. She currently divides her time between homes in rural England and the Arizona desert.

PAUL LEE is a painter and freelance illustrator who, on occasion, dabbles in comics. Paul suffers from the "grass is always greener" syndrome in that he would always rather be doing something else. Paul recently joined the Woodworker's Club and has discovered he likes power tools. He is also the recent winner of the Liquitex Dream Studio Contest, which he entered as a lark. He has just completed his third children's book, *Hank Aaron: Brave in Every Way.* Paul graduated from the Illustration Program at Art Center College of Design. His clients include Harcourt Brace, *Playboy,* Bantam Doubleday Dell, DC Comics, and Marvel Entertainment. He currently resides in Placentia, Ca. and exhibits his work at the Bain Gallery in Brea.

An award-winning, internationally known performer, recording artist, writer, and teaching artist, MILBRE BURCH is a storyteller in every sense of the word. One of the preeminent spoken word interpreters of the stories of Jane Yolen, she is also a teller of global folktales and original material. Her work has appeared in *Ruby Slippers, Golden Tears; Xanadu II, Ready-to-Tell Tales, More Ready-to-Tell Tales,* and *Best-Loved Stories Told at the National Storytelling Festival.* A veteran of spoken word festivals in 22 states and 12 European cities, she lives in Chapel Hill, N.C., with her husband, journalist Berkley Hudson, their two daughters, and a green-eyed black cat named Panther.

SUSAN J. KROUPA says "Harden Times" had an earlier version that won first place in the Deep South Writer's Conference Competition several years ago. Last year it was the only piece of speculative fiction to win an award in the Utah Arts Council Contest. Two previous *Realms* stories, "Scapegoat" and "Walter's Christmas Night Musik," made the preliminary Nebula ballot. Since then, Susan has been mostly finishing a novel, and has had stories appear in *Age of Reason* and *Bruce Colville's Shapeshifters.*

ANDY DUNCAN's fiction has appeared in *Asimov's, Starlight I, Weird Tales,* and Stephen Jones' *Best New Horror* series, and has been nominated for the Hugo, Nebula, Campbell, and International Horror Guild awards. His first book, a collection titled *Beluthahatchie and Other Stories,* was published in October 2000 by Golden Gryphon Press. A native of Batesburg, S.C., he has an MFA in fiction writing from the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, where he teaches creative writing, composition, and literature. His previous *Realms of Fantasy* story, "Fortitude," is currently on the preliminary Nebula ballot.

ROB VAGLE is originally from Crookston, Minn. After attending Clarion in 1993 he moved to Eugene, Or. to write and learn from the other professional writers that live there. He has never regretted that decision. "Messages" is his first published short story.

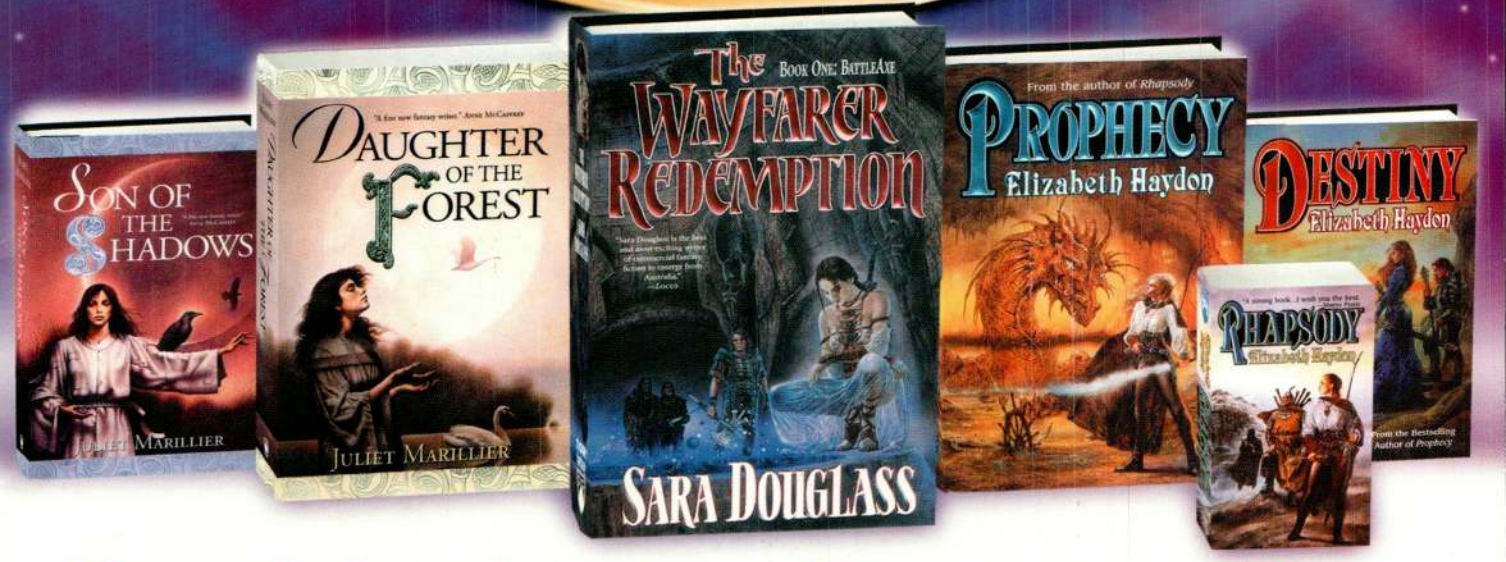
JULIET MARILLIER was born in Dunedin, New Zealand, a town with Scottish roots and Celtic influences. Growing up surrounded by the music and stories of Scotland and Ireland gave Juliet an affinity for history and folklore. She graduated from Otago University with a BA in languages. She keeps "one foot in the real world" by working part-time in a federal government agency. Juliet currently resides in Swan Valley near Perth, Western Australia. She is at work on her second historical fantasy series, set in Norway and Orkney in the Viking era.

KEVIN J. ANDERSON has written nearly 70 novels in the past 10 years. His most recent endeavor is as co-author of the new *Dune* trilogy with the late Frank Herbert's son, Brian Herbert. He is about to start work on the third 800-page *Dune* prequel. Kevin's first novel, *Resurrection, Inc.* was nominated for the Bram Stoker Award and has been released in a special 10th anniversary edition. Kevin often collaborates with his wife, writer Rebecca Moesta. The official Web site for Rebecca Moesta and Kevin Anderson is www.wordfire.com. The official *Dune* Web site is www.dunenovels.com.

DAVID SEELEY received a Bachelor of Architecture degree in 1984. He has been working as an independent consultant from 1998 to the present. He is the recipient of several AIA Design Honor Awards for his "New Neighborhoods at Park DuValle" and "New Boston Police Headquarters." Seeley has both attended and taught at Rice University in Houston, Texas. He will be exhibiting his artwork in the art shows of both Arisia in Boston (January 2001) and Boskane in Framingham, Mass. (February 2001). David invites you to visit his Web site at www.DaveSeeley.com.

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